Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam

Eighth- and ninth-century Armenia and Caucasian Albania were largely Christian provinces of the then Islamic Caliphate. Although they formed a part of the Iranian cultural sphere, they are often omitted from studies of both Islamic and Iranian history. In this book, Alison Vacca uses Arabic and Armenian texts to explore these Christian provinces as part of the Caliphate, identifying elements of continuity from Sasanian to caliphal rule, and more importantly expounding on significant moments of change in the administration of the Marwanid and early Abbasid periods. Vacca examines historical narrative and the construction of a Sasanian cultural memory during the late ninth and tenth centuries to place the provinces into a broader context of Iranian rule. This book will be of benefit to historians of Islam, Iran, and the Caucasus, but will also appeal to those studying themes of Iranian identity and Muslim–Christian relations in the Near East.

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Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam

Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania

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١١ حضرت رحلى الهموم فوجّهت إلى أبيض المدائن عنسى
١٢ اتسلّى عن الحظوظ وآسى لمحلّ من آل ساسان درس
١٣ ذكّرتنيهم الخطوب التوالى ولقد تذكر الخطوب وتنسى
١٤ وهم خافضون فى ظلّ عال مشرق يحسر العيون ويخسى
١٥ مغلق بابه على جبل القبق إلى دارتى خلاط ومكس
١٦ حلل لم تكن كاطلال سعدى فى قفار من البسابس ملس
١٧ ومساع لولا المحاباة منّى لم تطقها مسعاة عنس وعبس

Anxieties attended my lodging, therefore I turned my sturdy she-camel in the direction of the white (palace) of Ctesiphon 11

Consoling myself for what chances had come (upon me), and grieving for a decayed abode of the House of Sāsān. 12

Successive vicissitudes reminded me of them – and vicissitudes are apt to make a man remember, and forget – 13

When they dwelt at ease in the shadow of a tall (palace) overlooking (the surrounding land), wearying and weakening the eyes (that gazed at it), 14

Its gate locked against the mountain of al-Qabq [Caucasus], as far as the broad lands of Khilāṭ [Xlat‘] and Muks [Mokk‘] – 15

Abodes that were not like the traces of the encampment of [the Bedouin] Suʿda in the smooth-swept wastes of wildernesses, 16

And (high) endeavours which but for partiality on my part, the endeavor of [the Arab tribes] ʿAns and ʿAbs could not match. 17

Abū l-Walīd b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Buḥturī
(Arab poet, d. 897)[1]

[1] Arberry 1965, 74–7; see also Ali, 2006, 62.

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Acknowledgments

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Situating Places, People, and Dates

Balancing Armenian, Georgian, Albanian (as much as possible), Arab, and Iranian traditions demands that we establish certain patterns and norms from the start for the sake of consistency. We rely here on certain conventions intended to increase readability and accessibility. Dates appear streamlined as the Common Era rather than the *hijrī* of Arabic and Persian texts, the Armenian era, the *anno mundi* of Byzantine sources, or the Georgian *kronikon* system. To further assist the reader, the index serves as a short glossary including a snippet definition of foreign terms and short details about authors and political figures, including date of death when available.

Other choices might not appear self-evident. For example, terms in Arabic are transcribed in English based on the most common transliteration system in American publications. This puts it at odds with the Armenian transcription, so that the Arabic ش is rendered as *-sh-* while the Armenian շ is instead *-š-*. The Arabic خ is *-kh-* while the Armenian խ is *-x-* and غ is *-gh-* but ղ is *-ł-*. Persian is transcribed following the Arabic with the addition of *-p-* for پ and *-g-* for گ. To avoid both the Arabized and the Armenicized spellings, the Sasanian emperors appear based on the spelling in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* with the exception of Anūshirwān, as explained in Chapter 1. Following the example of several recent studies in medieval Armenian and Georgian history, the footnotes include the transcription of any text cited directly in Arabic, Persian, and Armenian. By contrast, the Greek and Syriac only appear if certain words have particular weight or to show the transformations as a word shifted from one language to another.

For the most part, toponyms appear in this book first in Arabic and then in Armenian or Georgian. So, for example, the capital of Armenia is Dabīl/Duin and the capital of Albania is Bardhʿa/Partaw. Albanian place names are listed in Armenian, since our only Albanian source was written in Armenian. Georgian toponyms follow suit with both Arabic and Georgian, such as with Tiflīs/Tpʻilisi. While the identification of some of these toponyms should certainly be contested, the goal is to invite cross-disciplinary discussions by making it easier for Arabists to locate Armenian and Albanian toponyms.

The broader challenge relates to the provincial names and categories that we ascribe to the region. We must start with the recognition that all of the toponyms employed here – Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Iran – are problematic in that they are constructed differently over time depending on the political and cultural realities of any given period. With the exception of *Iran*, we use the toponyms as found in Arabic sources throughout this book: Armenia (Armīniyya),[1] Albania (Arrān),[2] and Georgia (Jurzān),[3] each of which likely entered Arabic via Middle Persian. The use of the terms *Armenia*, *Albania*, and *Georgia* streamlines the North into three easily comprehensible provinces, but the reality must have been much more complicated. The use of provincial toponyms perpetuates certain assumptions about the cohesiveness of these regional groupings in the medieval period, even though organizing by smaller regions or dynastic affiliations makes more sense. Arabic texts typically link Armenia and Albania and rarely identify Georgia as a separate province, hence the subtitle of this book omits Georgia even though eastern Georgia was an important part of the caliphal province. Cities in eastern

[1] Armenia, Ἀρμενία in Greek, does not appear as such in Armenian. Instead, Armenians refer to Hayk‘ or, more commonly for this period, ašxarh Hayoc‘ (the land of the Armenians). In Georgian, it is Somxet‘i, from the word *samxret‘i* (south), a popular etymology dismissed in Toumanoff 1963, 62. In Parthian, it appears as *ʾrmny* and as *ʾlmny* in Middle Persian. Rapp 2014, 28, 67.

[2] Albania may well have been rendered as Aṙan in Albanian, as it appears in Georgian as Movakani or Rani, in Parthian as *ʾrdʾn*, in Middle Persian as *ʾldʾn*, and in Arabic as Arrān or al-Rān (where the Arabic spellings ارّان and الران result in identical pronunciation). The English term comes from the Greek, where the province appears as both Ἀριανοί and Ἀλβανοί, the latter via the Armenian *Ałuank‘*. Rapp 2014, 2, n. 6; Toumanoff 1963, 62.

[3] K‘art‘li, the province in eastern Georgia, frequently appears in English as Iberia from the Greek Ἰβηρία. The *-bēr-* here informs the Armenian Virk‘, although a traditional etymology links the Armenian Virk‘ instead to the Armenian word *ver*, meaning “above.” Sasanian-era inscriptions refer to the province with its Parthian name, *wyršn*, and Middle Persian, *wlwcʾn*, which inform the Syriac Gurzān and the Arabic Jurzān. We return to the Arabic Jurzān in Chapter 2. Rapp 2014, 9, n. 3 and 21, n. 73; Toumanoff 1963, 62.

Georgia instead appear in Arabic texts as part of Albania, as we will see in Chapter 2.

The word *Caucasus* rarely appears here. There are two reasons for this. First, the term *Qabq* appears rarely in Arabic histories about the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods. Where it does appear, it is not consistently applied to Armenia. *Qabq* instead refers to the North and only parts of the South Caucasus. Masʿūdī, for example, includes Georgia, Sharwān, and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband as part of the Caucasus, but centers his discussion of the region around the Khazars, the Avars (Sarīr), and the Rūs.[4] The Armenian lands do not enter into this passage. The rarity of the term in Arabic sources relevant to Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid rule, the exclusion of Armenia, and the inclusion of the Khazars render it difficult to adopt the term *Qabq* to the circumstances of caliphal rule.

Regardless, for our purposes there is no reason to use the term *Caucasus* when an alternative exists in Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, and Arabic sources from the Sasanian, Umayyad, and ʿAbbāsid periods. *Jarbī* and *garbyā* appear in Arabic and Syriac, respectively, to refer to the North in the Sasanian period. This builds on a much larger pattern in Armenian and Georgian, as we will see in Chapter 2, that defines the South Caucasus as the North: *č'rdiloy* (north) and *č'rdiloysa k'ueqanay* (the land of the north) in Georgian and *hiwsis* (north) and *kołmn hiwsisoy* (northern region) in Armenian.[5] This is one of the few details that bridges all of our sources across linguistic divides, culled from all religious groups of the Near East, and extending from the pre-Islamic and into the Islamic periods. The *North* fits our body of sources far better than the *Caucasus*.

Accordingly, the toponyms found here are based mainly on the descriptions of the North as found in ʿAbbāsid-era literature. The exception to this rule is *Iran*, which hardly ever appears as such in contemporary sources.[6] Iran here refers to the broad and diverse *oikoumene* instead of the modern national boundaries. The territory is ex-Sasanian: *ērān* or *Ērānšahr*, the domain of the Iranians. By contrast, *Persian* refers to the language and anything specific to the province in southwest Iran called Persia, known in Arabic as Fārs, even though the terms *Iran* and *Persia* appear to be used interchangeably in many modern studies. The Sasanians

[4] Garsoïan & Martin-Hisard 2012; Masʿūdī 1861, II 1–78, 1958, 142–65.
[5] Rapp 2014, 125–6.
[6] Savant 2013b, 9–11; see also Hanaoka 2016, 14-16 for a summary of sources on the definition of Iran and Persia.

were Persians and their empire was vast, so the Persian Empire spread, but that does not mean that all Sasanian provinces were Persian.

In much the same way, we here avoid the use of the term *Arab* unless speaking of individuals who explicitly identify as Arabs through genealogy or tribal *nisba*s, despite the fact that it has long been commonplace to refer to "Arab fiscal policy" or "Arab governors," etc. This is not to place boundaries on Arabness or Iranianness, but to be cognizant of the complexities of medieval society and the concerns of our sources. Several of the Muslim *amīrs* of Armenia appear frequently as Arabs in modern literature without any indication of their tribal or societal ties in the medieval sources. Who decided that the Zurārids were Arabs and on what evidence? Is it because they lived in Armenia at a time of increased Arabization? Is it because they spoke Arabic? And how do we know which language they spoke? Is it because they intermittently worked with the caliphal representatives and armies? Omitting the designation *Arab* does not dismiss their potential Arabness, but in fact allows for the possibility of ethnic difference in the North. Along similar lines, not all Arab governors of the North were Arabs, however much they represented Arab (i.e., caliphal) power.

These distinctions may rely on too strict of a definition for broader acceptance in the field of Islamic history.[7] They would cause significant trouble for anyone writing on Arabization, *walāʾ*, or the conquests, to name just a few examples. As such, they are not intended to suggest a model for writing about Iranian history. Instead, they speak to the main concerns of this book, which explores non-Arab provinces under Arab rule, non-Persian provinces in a diverse Iran, and non-Muslim provinces of an Islamic Caliphate. The Armenians, Georgians, and Albanians were not only distinct from Persians; at times, they were vehemently and violently opposed to Persians. Possibly even more than Persian rule, Iranian identity in the North hinges on the memories of Parthian power. Embracing the idea of Iran allows us to maintain the recognition of ethnic and religious differences while still fitting the North into the same cultural and political sphere as its neighbors.

[7] For recent discussions of Arabness and Persianness in the early Islamic period, see Cooperson 2014; Crone 2012, 74–5; Turner 2004. On Armenianness, see Garsoïan 1971; Regate 2007.

1

Non-Persian Provinces of Iran, Non-Muslim Provinces of Islam

An Introduction to the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid North

In the second half of the ninth century, an Iranian historian named Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā l-Balādhurī wrote *The Conquests of the Lands*, an Arabic history about the Islamic conquest of the Near East and the formation of the Caliphate.[1] The drama reached from Spain to Khurāsān, and Balādhurī documents both the fall of the great cities of Sasanian Iran and Byzantine Syria and the establishment of caliphal rule through his own time. He includes information about Armenia and Caucasian Albania, Christian lands that had formed the border between the Byzantine Greeks and the Sasanian Persians for centuries.[2] He records the names of caliphal governors and the circumstances of the cities of the North, such as Tiflīs/Tpʿilisi, Dabīl/Duin, and Bardhʿa/Partaw.[3] Significantly, Balādhurī starts off his

[1] We here embrace the term "Islamic" instead of "Arab" conquests due to the self-representation of the conquering forces as *muʾminūn*. As such, we allow the assumption that the *muʾminūn* will become the *muslimūn*, mainly for ease of exposition since "the believers' conquest" does not flow particularly easily. For a succinct explanation of the problems here, see Donner's review of Hoyland's *In God's Path*; Donner 2015, especially 139. The word "conquest" also deserves attention in the case of the North, since the forays against Armenia and Albania in the 640s did not establish any lasting caliphal presence. In reference to the North, we therefore prefer "Islamic incursions," leaving the broader discussion about "Islamic conquests" for scholars of more central lands such as Syria and Iraq.

[2] This book uses the toponyms Armenia (Armīniyya) and Albania (Arrān) as found in Arabic geographical treatises, specifically those from the tenth-century Balkhī school. Accordingly, Armenia refers to the modern-day Republic of Armenia and parts of eastern Turkey; Albania includes the modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan and parts of eastern Georgia; and Azerbaijan is the modern-day homonymous province in northwestern Iran. We outline the provinces as found in Arabic geographical texts in Chapter 2.

[3] Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw were the capitals of Armenia and Albania, respectively. When possible, toponyms will appear in Arabic first and Armenian or Georgian second.

discussion of the North with an extended description of the activities of Sasanian emperors: Kavād I built cities such as Baylaqān/P'aytakaran and Bardhʿa/Partaw and Ḵosrow I Anūshirwān built still more, including the famous wall at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. According to Balādhurī, the Sasanians settled Persian populations in Armenia and Albania and installed rulers over the various regions.

Balādhurī's focus on the conquests cannot explain his interest in Sasanian emperors. By the time the caliphal armies arrived in the North in the 640s, the Sasanians had already abandoned their claim to the territory. The caliphal armies conquered Armenia and Albania from local, Greek, and Khazar forces.[4] So why was a ninth-century historian writing about the seventh-century Islamic conquests of Armenia and Albania so concerned about Anūshirwān, a Sasanian emperor (*shāhanshāh*) who died in 579? What made Sasanian history of the North so relevant to ʿAbbāsid-era historians? Balādhurī rarely fixated on Sasanian history elsewhere in the Iranian cultural sphere, known today as the Iranian *oikoumene*, so why did he care about it here? And, further, what are we, as modern historians, to do with this information?

If we look through the seminal modern works about the North in the eighth and ninth centuries, there is little interest in reconciling caliphal history with the Sasanian legacy. Anūshirwān does not contribute to the discussions of treaties, caliphal governors, raids against Byzantium, or Arab–Khazar skirmishes that fill the pages of the modern histories about the Umayyad and early-ʿAbbāsid North. Yet this ʿAbbāsid-era preoccupation with the Sasanian legacy of the Northern provinces is pervasive and, interestingly, exhibits common ground with the description of the caliphal North as found in Armenian sources.

A generation after the ʿAbbāsid Revolution,[5] an Armenian priest named Łewond wrote a history of the Caliphate spanning from the death of the

Cities in Albania appear in Arabic and Armenian because our only extant Albanian history was written in Armenian.

[4] Ghodrat-Dizaji 2011. See Yāqūt 1995, I 161: ولم تزل أرمينية بأيدي الروم حتى جاء الإسلام. Armenia and Albania seem to have been tributary vassals of the Sasanians, though. Otherwise, we would need to explain Shahrbarāz's presence at the conquest of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband and the involvement of Albanian troops in the Sasanian armies at Qādisiyya. Garsoïan 2012b, 15; 2009, 105–11, claim that the Sasanians appointed governors over the North after the period suggested by Ghodrat-Dizaji.

[5] The probable date of Łewond's *Patmabanut'iwn* is contested, see most notably Greenwood 2012. However, it is traditionally dated to the end of the eighth century because it cuts off around 788. Some of the arguments deployed to place the text later cannot withstand scrutiny. For example, nineteenth-century editors misidentified Jaʿd [b. Dirham] as Jāḥiẓ. I agree with Mahé's hesitant support for the traditional dating; see Mahé 1996, 126: "la

Prophet Muḥammad to his own time. Starting with Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān, and perfunctorily skipping over ʿAlī in deference to the Sufyānids,[6] he organizes his *History* by caliphal reign. While Łewond discusses the Sufyānid caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya with the Armenian spelling Izid, the Marwānid caliph Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, "a wicked man and moved by fury," appears instead under the name Yezkirt.[7] This refers to Yazdegerd, the Sasanian *shāhanshāh* responsible for the fifth-century persecution of Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian Christianity. Accordingly, this elicits a specific response from an Armenian audience familiar with the story. Even before he lists the alleged iniquities of Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Łewond is priming his audience to despise this caliph by comparing him to one of the most vilified rulers of Armenian history. This use of the name Yazdegerd is not a lone occurrence, and Armenian authors borrowed more broadly from earlier works about the Sasanians as they formulated a vocabulary to describe the circumstances of caliphal rule. The memory of the Sasanians retained power long after the Sasanians themselves had fallen. Armenians, like historians and geographers writing in Arabic, imagined caliphal power in the North in part as an incarnation or continuation of Sasanian might.

This book began as an attempt to discover the "Umayyad North" in both Arabic and Armenian sources. Given that most of these sources are from the late ninth and tenth centuries, the study of Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid rule in the North should start by examining the goals and expectations of late ninth- and tenth-century authors. We cannot excise all of the Sasanian material from ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic descriptions of Armenia and Albania just because it does not contribute to the discussion of "what really happened" there during the period of caliphal control in

comparaison avec les historiens du X^e^ siècle, Yovhannēs Drasxanakertcʿi et Tʿovma Arcruni, sans confirmer positivement la datation de Łewond au VIII^e^ siècle, n'oblige pas non plus à la rejeter. Il semblerait donc plus prudent de s'en tenir à cette datation…"

[6] The Umayyad Caliphate ruled from Syria from 661 to 750, when the ʿAbbāsids took over. Umayyad rule is broken into two main periods. The Sufyānids were the first branch of the family to rule, then the Marwānids took over with the ascension of Marwān b. Ḥakam in 684. The Marwānids, specifically Marwān's son ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705), were known for their sweeping reforms, shaping Marwānid rule as particularly different from its predecessor. We return to the implications of the reforms in the North in Chapter 6. The omission of ʿAlī in Łewond's *History* places it in line with Syrian historiography; see Borrut 2011, 56, 151, and 159, for examples.

[7] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 72v: Իսկ ապա յետ նորա. յեզկիրտ ոմն տիրեալ ամս: *վեց.* որ էր այր ժանտ և մոլեկան[ան]ութեամբ շարժեցեալ; for Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, see Matenadaran 1902, 12r–12v. For a printed edition, see Łewond 1857, 129.

the eighth and ninth centuries. Instead, we need to look at the prevalence of Sasanian themes and figures such as Anūshirwān in ʿAbbāsid-era texts as a signal about the perceptions of the North when these texts were composed.

The descriptions of caliphal administration in Armenia and Albania can only be understood in light of the regions' Sasanian legacy, a cue that the regions' ties to Iran are a pivotal part of ruling over and writing about the North. It is only in sifting through at least two layers of later accumulations in the historical traditions that we may offer suggestions of actual administrative continuity. We must first grapple with the function of the frontier, and especially the Byzantine recapture of some of the borderlands at the end of the ninth century and into the tenth, in the forgetting of Byzantine claims to power. Second, we must also recognize that the rise to power of the Iranian élite in the North and throughout the Caliphate in the second half of the ninth century dictated how historians would remember caliphal rule and claims to legitimacy. As a result, this book is as much or more about the political circumstances and historical writing of the tenth century as it is about the actual period of caliphal rule in the eighth and early ninth centuries.

To the reader unfamiliar with the caliphal North, it might seem relatively novel to consider Armenia and Caucasian Albania, where the majority of the population remained Christian in the eighth and ninth centuries, as examples of both Iranian and Islamic provinces. This first chapter lays out the significance of Iranian identity in the caliphal North and the rationale for writing Islamic history from the examples of Christian provinces. It also introduces the theoretical framework, the thematic approach, and the trajectory of the argument.

THE NON-PERSIAN NORTH AS IRANIAN HISTORY

Since most of our sources were composed in the late ninth and tenth centuries, placing their production historically means understanding the contemporary political and cultural expectations in the broader Iranian setting. Despite the close relationship with Christian Byzantium, the philological, religious, and historical ties between Iran, Armenia, and Albania suggest instead that we center the analysis of the North in relation to Iran. This pulls the North into the broader Iranian cultural sphere, which included not only Iraq and Iran, but also as far east as Khurāsān and Transoxania.

The Iranian Intermezzo

Khurāsān, which formed the eastern frontiers of the Caliphate, saw the rise to power of local Iranian families in the ninth and tenth centuries. The Sāmānids, a Persian family of landed gentry (*dihqān*) with Zoroastrian origins, took over in the East from the ninth century.[8] At their height in the tenth century, they ruled over Khurāsān, Transoxania, and some parts of the eastern Caspian region with capitals at Samarqand and Bukhārā. They are frequently remembered today for their role in fostering the growth of Persian literature, especially for their patronage of the Iranian national epic, the *Shāhnāma*, which marks what I. Goldziher once called the "linguistic shuʿūbiyya."[9] The Sāmānids, whether in emulation of the neighboring Iranian élite in Iran and Iraq or in response to some internal interest, fashioned themselves as descendants of Bahrām Chōbīn and, rarely, as *shāhanshāhs*, the "King of Kings,"[10] thus linking themselves explicitly to both the Parthian rebels and monarchs of pre-Islamic Iran. In this process, the Sāmānids were building on a long history of engagement with Iranian heritage in the caliphal East under the Arab or Arabized Ṭāhirids, who ruled Khurāsān in the ninth century,[11] and the Persian Ṣaffārids, who ruled Sīstān in the ninth and tenth centuries.[12] To add to these, there were numerous local families around the Caspian that traced their own lineage back to Sasanian times, such as the Bāwandids.[13]

Moving into the heartlands of the Caliphate, the Būyids left their native province of Daylam to rule much of Iran, Iraq, and even parts of Syria in the name of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs in the tenth century until they lost control of Baghdad to the Seljuks in the eleventh century.[14] When they first took over Baghdad, the Būyids honored the nearby ruins of the Sasanian

[8] Bosworth 1967, 101–2; Frye 1975; Tor 2009; on Sāmānid coinage, see Kovalev 2002; Mitchiner 1987.

[9] Richter-Bernburg 1974, though the term was coined in Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889); On Sāmānid literature in Persian, see Meisami 1999, 15–46, especially 19: "The fact that the rise to prominence of Persian as a literary medium went hand in hand with the revival of Iranian customs and traditions suggests that it may be more useful to view the various manifestations of 'Persianizing' movements – religious, cultural, literary and linguistic – as less anti-Arab(ic) than anti-ʿAbbasid"; Meisami 1993, 249, n. 2.

[10] See Chapter 3; Tor 2012, 154; Treadwell 2003.

[11] Bosworth 1967, 99–100, 1969a, 1969b, 1975; Kaʿbī 1983.

[12] Barthold 1906; Bosworth 1967, 103–6, 1975, 1994, Stern 1971; on Ṣaffārid coinage, see Tor 2002; Vasmer 1930.

[13] Bosworth 1973, 1967, 83–5; Kennedy 2009; Madelung 1975, 216–19.

[14] Nagel, "Buyids," *EIr*; Baker 2016; Bosworth 1967, 94–7; Busse 1975; Minorsky 1932; Mottahedeh 2012, 1980; on Būyid coinage, see Treadwell 2001.

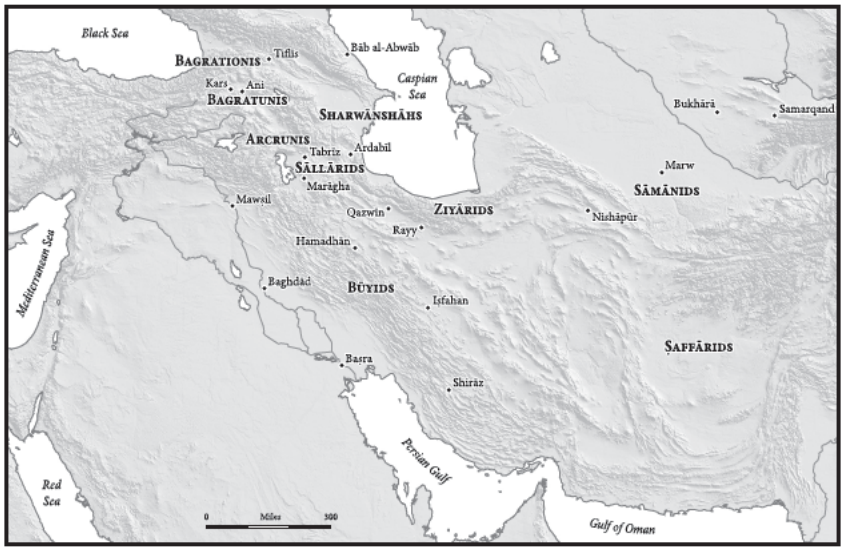

FIGURE 1.1 Map of the Iranian *oikoumene* in the tenth century.

capital, Ctesiphon.[15] They placed their own inscriptions immediately next to Sasanian inscriptions in Persepolis, translating the monuments into symbols of contemporary Iranian power. They also described their legitimacy in Iranian terms by claiming descent from Bahrām V Gōr and taking on the title *shāhanshāh*. The Būyid *amīr*s Rukn al-Dawla and ʿAḍūd al-Dawla, for example, minted coins in both Pahlavi and Arabic script claiming the Sasanian title, some of which included "a Pahlavi legend containing traditional formulae of invocation for the Persian monarchs."[16] This provided the Būyids with a claim to power that did not rely on caliphal recognition, although later Būyid *amīr*s were granted the title directly from the caliph.

Based on these examples, V. Minorsky coined this period of local rule between the Arab ʿAbbāsids and the Turkish Seljuks as the "Iranian intermezzo" of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Minorsky's breakthrough in this respect includes the recognition that "Persian renaissance in Khorasan [under the Ṭāhirids, Saffārids, and Sāmānids] had a momentous sequel in Central and Western Persia [under the Būyids] and in Armenia."[17] By this,

[15] Madelung 1969, 106; Savant 2013a, 179.

[16] Būyid coins typically follow the pattern of post-Marwānid aniconic Arabic coins, but rare examples emulate Sasanian norms. Bosworth 2009, 35–6; Busse 1973; Daryaee 2015; Madelung 1969; Meisami 1993, 250; Miles 1975, 375; Treadwell 2003.

[17] Minorsky 1953b, 110.

he means that the Sājids, an Arabized Iranian family of Central Asian origin, had gained control over Azerbaijan and parts of Armenia at the end of the ninth and the start of the tenth centuries. After their fall, "[t]he stage was vacated by the Arabs and was occupied by local Iranian elements, the Daylamites and the Kurds."[18] The heirs of the Sājids, such as the Kurdish Daysam b. Ibrāhīm and the Jīlī Lashkarī b. Mardī, were followed quickly by the rise of the Sallārids, a Daylamī family also known as the Musāfirids, who controlled Azerbaijan, Albania, and some of Armenia in the tenth century and into the eleventh.[19]

The Iranian intermezzo in fact includes a number of other Iranian, mostly Kurdish, minor dynasties in the former caliphal provinces of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan before the arrival of the Seljuks, such as the Kurdicized Arab Rawwādids in Azerbaijan[20] and the Kurdish Marwānid family in eastern Anatolia from the tenth to the eleventh centuries.[21] Finally, the most famous Kurdish dynasty, the Shaddādids, came to power in Dabīl/Duin in the tenth century, ruling until the twelfth. The Shaddādids named their children after Sasanian *shāhanshāh*s and even claimed descent from the Sasanian line.[22] It is the other branch of the Shaddādid family, which controlled Ani, that Minorsky offers as the "prehistory" of Salāḥ al-Dīn.[23]

Albania also saw the rise of Iranian families in the tenth century, most famously the Sharwānshāhs, descendants of the Persianized Arab Shaybānī tribe who ruled over the area of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband in the provinces of Sharwān and Layzān, with their capital at Shamākhiyya. Sometime in the ʿAbbāsid period, certainly by the tenth century, they took on the Sasanian title *shāh* of Sharwān. In the ninth century, Ibn Khurradādhbih claimed that Ardašīr I was the first to bestow this title.[24] At the end of the tenth century, the Sharwānshāhs had adopted names such as Anūshirwān

[18] Bosworth 1967, 86–7; Madelung 1975, 228–32; Minorsky 1953b, 111; Vasmer 1927.

[19] Bosworth, "Mosaferids," *EIr*; Cahen 1963; Huart 1922; Madelung 1975, 223–6; Ross 1925; on the coins of the Sallārids, see Vardanyan 2007; Vasmer 1927.

[20] Blaum 2006; Bosworth 1967, 88–9; Madelung 1975, 236; on Rawwādid coins, see Album 1972; Vardanyan 2009.

[21] Amedroz 1903; Blaum 1992, 1993; Bosworth 1967, 53–4; Ripper 2009; on the coins of the Marwānids, see Heidemann 1998.

[22] Peacock, "Shaddadids," *EIr*.

[23] Madelung 1975, 239–43; Minorsky 1953b. On Shaddādid coinage, see Akobyan 2008; Mušełyan 1986; Vardanyan & Zlobin 2014.

[24] Bosworth, "Šervānšahs," *EIr*, 2009, 39; Madelung 1975, 243–9; Minorsky 1958; on the coins of the Sharwānshāhs, see Akopyan & Vardanyan 2009; Kouymjian 1969; Vardanyan & Zlobin 2014; Vardanyan 2016, 213.

and Qubādh (the Arabic version of Kavād), claiming Sasanian names for their children,[25] and eventually historians writing in Arabic would name them descendants of Anūshirwān himself.[26] The idea of the Sasanians thus retained currency across Iran during the tenth-century intermezzo.

The arguments of this book rest on the recognition that the Iranian intermezzo was not merely a collection of Muslim Iranian dynasties, as Minorsky perceived it, but that it also carried over into the Christian lands on the edges of Iran. The clearest example may be the land of the Christian Avars, which appears in Arabic sources as the Kingdom of the Throne. In the tenth century, Masʿūdī identified their king as a descendant of Bahrām V Gōr, whose title was *ṣāḥib al-Sarīr*, "the master of the Throne." Yaʿqūbī explains that "the throne (*sarīr*) is out of gold that one of the Persian kings sent to him. It is said that it was Anūshirwān who sent it, and that he [*ṣāḥib al-Sarīr*] was named after it."[27] Masʿūdī claims that the Lord of the Throne was a descendant of Bahrām Gōr and makes an explicit comparison not only to the Sharwānshāhs, but also to Nūḥ b. Naṣr (r. 943–54), the Sāmānid ruler of Khurāsān.[28] Here, on the periphery of the Iranian *oikoumene*, is a Christian kingdom claiming legitimacy in the tenth century based on the lasting authority, real or not, of Anūshirwān. The Avars were only one of the Christian lands on the periphery of both Islam and Iran to follow the trends of the Iranian intermezzo.

At the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries, local Armenian and Georgian kingdoms appeared in the North. This is remembered in Armenian and Georgian historiography as a golden age of independence. The haunting and breathtaking ruins of the Bagratuni capital of Ani and the much-celebrated church at Ałtʻamar, a product of the Arcruni kings of Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan, remain as a testimony to the independence and accomplishments of Armenian kingdoms in the tenth century.[29] Several Bagratunis had served as Prince of the Armenians (*Išxan Hayocʻ*) under the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsids, but Ašot Bagratuni took

[25] Minorsky 1958, 116.

[26] Bosworth 1973, 60.

[27] Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 382: وهو سرير من ذهب كان بعث به بعض ملوك الفرس ويقال انّ انوشروان بعث به اليه فسمّى بذلك السرير; Balādhurī 1866, 196; On the Sarīr, see *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 447–50; Ibn Rustih 1892, 147–8; Minorsky 1958, 97–100.

[28] Masʿūdī 1861, 4–5, 1958, 144.

[29] Both of these are contested sites of cultural heritage, as they exist today in eastern Turkey. On the city of Ani, see Cowe 2001; Hakobyan 1988; Harutʻyunyan 1964; Kévorkian 2001; Marr 2001. There is also an interesting nonacademic website chronicling the history of the city called "Virtual Ani." On the church at Ałtʻamar, see Davies 1991; Der Nersessian 1965; Jones 2007; Mnacʻakanyan 1985.

FIGURE 1.2 Sculptural relief of Smbat Bagratuni on the monastery of Hałpat. Photo courtesy of Christina Maranci.

the position in 862. In or around 884, both the Byzantine emperor and the ʿAbbāsid caliph sent crowns to Ašot, thereby recognizing him as King Ašot I (r. 884–90) of the Bagratuni kingdom.[30] The Bagratunis, while tributary to the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, retained independence until Byzantium absorbed the kingdom in 1045. A cadet branch of the Bagratuni family, known as the Bagrationis in Georgian, installed itself further north in Georgia from 813; after the Decade of Anarchy, it too declared independence, reestablishing the Georgian monarchy in 888. This ushered in a "golden age" for Georgia too. Following the unification of Abkhāz/Apʻxazetʻi with Kʻartʻli, west and east Georgia were brought together into a unified Sakʻartʻvelo (Georgia) whose monarchs such as David Agmašenebeli (r. 1089–1125) and Tʻamar (r. 1184–1213) became the strongest powers in the medieval Caucasus. Meanwhile, the Arcrunis, Armenian nobles of the southern region of Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan, received a crown from

[30] On the Bagratuni kingdom, see Dédéyan 2008, 243–96; Garsoïan 2004b; Grigoryan 1983; Hakobian 1965; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a.

the *amīr* of Azerbaijan only later, in 908.[31] The Armenian kingdom of Vaspurakan lasted until its territory met a fate similar to that of the Bagratuni kingdom, ceded to the Byzantine Empire in 1021.

We must be careful to couch the rise of these kingdoms in the political setting of the broader Iranian world: the Bagratunis, Bagrationis, and Arcrunis were able to come to power because ʿAbbāsid control had waned with the so-called Decade of Anarchy in the mid-ninth century. Further, the kingdoms of the North may have been independent, but the Armenians, Georgians, and Albanians still tapped into the broader processes of Iranian power by formulating a vocabulary of legitimacy that reflected broader trends across the Iranian intermezzo in the tenth century. The title *shāhanshāh* or its equivalents *malik al-mulūk* and *mepʻetʻ-mepʻe* appear in contemporary Armenian, Georgian, and Arabic sources referring to both the Bagratunis and the Bagrationis. As an example, a sculptural depiction of Smbat Bagratuni, the King of Armenia (r. 977–990), appears on the façade of the monastery at Hałpat. The folds of his turban break pattern to reveal an inscription announcing him as the King of Ani by coopting the Sasanian title: شاهنشاه انه الملك.[32] The high-relief images carved onto the church at Ałtʻamar demonstrate that the Arcrunis similarly experimented with Sasanian trappings of power.

The expression of legitimacy in reference to the Sasanians is a factor of the Iranian political vocabulary of the tenth century. Its spread was not tied to religion or region, as both Muslims and Christians used Sasanian titles. We cannot understand these reinvented memories of the Sasanians as a pan-Iranian movement, as they were regionally constructed according to the specific localized concerns. And yet, as much as these memories appear in very different contexts, they are also mutually comprehensible, such that Armenian and Georgian expressions of power would have made sense outside of the immediate area because other families such as the Būyids similarly experimented with the symbols of Sasanian power. The Iranian intermezzo ranged from Khurāsān straight across Iran and Iraq and into Armenia and Albania. Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian political independence, then, should be viewed from the perspective of the broader Iranian cultural sphere, the Iranian *oikoumene*.

[31] On the Arcruni kingdom of Vaspurakan, see Dédéyan 2008, 243–96; Garsoïan 2004b; Vardanyan 1969.

[32] Ter-Łevondyan 1979.

The North as Part of the Iranian Oikoumene

The inclusion of the North in the broader Iranian *oikoumene* certainly predates the Iranian intermezzo. Most studies expounding on the relationship between Iran and Armenia focus on the Sasanian period instead of the re-imagination of Sasanian power during the intermezzo. Armenia and Albania were sometimes deemed Iranian (*ērān*) and sometimes non-Iranian (*anērān*) in the Sasanian period,[33] but their cultures demonstrated clear affinities to the Iranian world. Philologists and linguists produced the first layer of scholarship to acknowledge the cultural ties between Armenia, Georgia, and Iran, including works by A. Meillet, E. Benveniste, G. Bolognesi, M. Leroy, M. Andronikašvili, R. Bielmeier, H. Bailey, and J. Gippert, among others.[34]

For historians, the question has appeared as one of the defining features in the history of Armenian identity since the 1970s. As T. Greenwood points out, "[t]he penetrating studies by Garsoïan and Russell over the past four decades have proved to be particularly influential, to the extent that no scholar today would seriously contemplate studying early medieval Armenia without acknowledging its Iranian heritage."[35] In large part, this interest in the Iranian strains of Armenian and Georgian history and historiography is rooted in the many studies of C. Toumanoff. Toumanoff centers medieval Armenia and Georgia at the crossroads of a number of different civilizations, balanced on the edges of Iran, Byzantium, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean. With the close study of chronology and prosopography, he meticulously traces the family lines of Caucasian nobles with close attention to the development of the aristocratic stratum of society in Georgia and Armenia both before and after Christianization. One of his main arguments is that Caucasian history has not been adequately integrated into Byzantine studies, but his work, including his seminal *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (1963), rightfully places Georgia and Armenia at the nexus of various networks, recognizing the close ties to the broader Iranian world.

[33] For a wonderfully illustrative example of contested claims to Iranianness, see Payne 2015, 155-6, based on Dasxuranc'i.

[34] See, for example, Bailey & Schmitt, "Armenia and Iran," EIr; Benveniste 1929; Meillet 1922. Garsoïan 1994, 143–4, n. 130, and Garsoïan 1997, 10, provide a more substantial list of publications by philologists that outline the connection between Armenian and Iranian counterparts.

[35] Greenwood 2008, 1.

J. Russell's extensive publications similarly reveal a large array of interests, centered on religion, Mithraism and Zoroastrianism in particular, and on Armenian epic as "an aspect of Armeno–Iranian interaction."[36] While this does not overlap with the themes explored here, it lays the foundation for further work on Armenia and the Iranian *oikoumene*. Russell's exploration of the "edges" of the Iranian world and his placement of Armenia into dialog with cultural currents in Central Asia offer remarkably rich suggestions for further work in Iranian history.[37]

N. Garsoïan's studies, particularly those more closely tied to historiography and sociopolitical history, align more with the concerns of this book. Specifically, she states that barring some famous exceptions Armenia "remained an Oriental society alien to the Mediterranean world."[38] Noting that the earliest Armenian literature appears soon after the Persian–Armenian war of 450–1, Garsoïan further argues that Armenian sources reveal a pronounced bias against the Sasanians. "Born under such auspices, this literature perforce reflected Armenia's unalterable rejection of Zoroastrianism and of its entire Iranian inheritance."[39] This "received tradition," as she terms it, a constructed memory that prioritizes Christianity and simultaneously denigrates the East, cannot efface the "Iranian element" and the "Iranian *Weltanschauung*" of Armenia that is visible, for example, in its clothing, titles, inscriptions, and names, in addition to the shared social, legal, artistic, and political milieux of both Iran and Armenia.[40] She continues: "The reluctance to acknowledge Iranian components in Armenian culture has shown remarkable persistence. Once laid down, it has survived some fifteen centuries to reach into the present."[41] With this, she threw down the gauntlet to press others into examining Armenian history in its Iranian context.

While Toumanoff, Russell, and Garsoïan have certainly instigated a shift in the way that historians describe Armenian history, art historians have also picked up on their themes to push into new territory. Art historical studies include not only the works of N. Garsoïan and J. Russell as noted earlier, but also those of M. Compareti, T. Matthews, and C. Maranci.[42] Historians have also continued the discussion, most notably

[36] Russell 2004, xv.
[37] Russell 2009.
[38] Garsoïan 1994, 118; see also Garsoïan 1971 and 2012b, X, for an elaboration of this idea.
[39] Garsoïan 1994, 125.
[40] Garsoïan 1976, 178–9, 1981, 1996.
[41] Garsoïan 1976, 191, n. 8; see also Garsoïan 2004c, 95.
[42] Compareti 2010; Maranci 2015; Mathews 1982.

in the work of P. Pourshariati, to which we will return, and the many studies of S. Rapp.

While duly recognizing the significance of Byzantine–Caucasian relations, Rapp's *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography* (2003) provides abundant examples of how medieval Georgian sources "painted Georgian and Caucasian society in hues reminiscent of pre-Islamic Iran."[43] His more recent *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes* (2014) continues in this vein by highlighting the use of Georgian sources as internal to Sasanian history, identifying "manifestations of Caucasia's *active participation in and contribution to* the Iranian Commonwealth across the *longue durée*."[44] These studies trace elements of Iranian epic, customs, political language, and names in medieval Georgian literature, thereby presenting the sources of the North as simultaneously internal to and yet still distinct from the broader *oikoumene*.[45]

The close relationship between Armenia, Georgia, and Iran frequently appears in scholarly works about the pre-Islamic Arsacid and Sasanian periods, then, although it is clear that the Iranian orientation of the North is significant well past the arrival of Islam, and specifically in Safavid history.[46]

This book builds off of innovative work in Armenian and Georgian history by drawing these conversations into the period of direct caliphal rule in the eighth and early ninth centuries. It argues that Iranian identity and Sasanian legacy inform not only how Armenian sources explain caliphal rule, as suggested in the works of N. Garsoïan and R. Thomson, but also how Arabic sources engage with the Armenian and Albanian past. Specifically, the sources composed during the Iranian intermezzo rely on contemporary Iranian understandings of power and legitimacy, explicitly and implicitly linked to Sasanian legacy, in the description of caliphal rule in the North.

[43] Rapp 2003, 2.

[44] Rapp 2014, 54.

[45] Rapp 2014, 185: Georgian sources "offer invaluable *internal* insights into the diverse Iranian world but from distinctly K'art'velian and Caucasian point[s] of view." Elsewhere, Rapp 2009, 682–3, identified one of the primary concerns of this current book: "Georgia's Iranian heritage long predates the ʿAbbāsids, though it is possible that certain of its aspects may have been reinforced, modified, and even introduced/invented in connection with the efflorescence of an Islamic-Iranian culture under the ʿAbbāsid regime." The only change I would introduce to this is that the changes may not have stemmed from the ʿAbbāsids themselves, but rather from the Iranian families ruling the Caliphate in the name of the ʿAbbāsids.

[46] See Zekiyan 2005 for an overview of Armenians and the Safavids.

The Iranian intermezzo demonstrates the persistence of common ideas across the Iranian *oikoumene*. This means that a comparative approach between the North and other Iranian provinces, especially the East, can be remarkably fruitful. We certainly cannot not imply that the North and the East are mirror societies, or responding as one to historical stimuli. Iranian identity does not imply a uniform set of ideals or perspectives, as the Iranian *oikoumene* is and always was diverse. Instead, historians writing in Arabic describe an imagined Sasanian past in comparable but regionally specific ways across the Iranian cultural sphere.

Mnemonic Drift: Sasanian Legacy Is not Sasanian History

Writing in the ninth century, the Arab poet Buḥturī expounded on the extent of Sasanian rule "as far as the broad lands of Khilāṭ [Xlatʻ] and Muks [Mokkʻ]." In this poem, cited at greater length at the start of this book, Buḥturī meditates on the process of remembering and forgetting the Sasanian past. By remembering the stability of the Sasanian frontiers, the poet's broader point rests in the political concerns of his own day following the upheaval after the murder of Mutawakkil.[47] Embedded in this comparison between the Sasanians and ʿAbbāsids is an assumption about legitimacy, basing caliphal claims to rule on the antecedents provided by the Persian Empire.

Buḥturī's project was part of a much larger pattern in both Armenian and Arabic sources to describe the ʿAbbāsids as heirs to Iranian kingship and, more specifically, to situate caliphal rule as a continuation of Sasanian rule. In the North, historians fit the circumstances of Armenia under the Caliphate into the same framework that had existed to understand Armenia as a Sasanian province. The caliphs took over for the *shāhanshāhs*. Writing in the twelfth century, Samuēl Anecʻi explains that "at that time the reign of the Persians who were called the Sasanians fell, having lasted 418 years, and the Arabs took over Persian reign and they were called Commanders of the Faithful [Ամիրըլմումնիք to render أمير المؤمنين]."[48]

The recognition that caliphal rule in the North was dependent on the Sasanian legacy is certainly not new here. C. Toumanoff explains that

[47] Ali 2006; see also Savant 2013a.

[48] Samuēl Anecʻi 1893, 82: Յայսմ ժամանակի բարձաւ իշխանութիւն Պարսից, տեւեալ ամս ՆԺԸ. որ կոչէրն Սասանեան, և առին Տաճիկք զիշխանութիւն Պարսից և կոչեցան ամիրըլմումնիք.

"when, in the seventh century, the Sassanid Monarchy fell, its heritage passed to the Islamic empire of the Caliphs; and this implied but little change for Caucasia which, having been fought over by Rome and Iran, continued to be fought over by Byzantium and Islam."[49] Others have continued this comparison with more specifics about the debts caliphal administration owed to Sasanian antecedents. For example, J. Laurent and M. Canard note that the caliphs

> avaient concédé aux Arméniens une autonomie fort semblable à celle dont ils avaient joui sous les Perses: ils leur avaient accordé le droit de lever eux-mêmes le tribute dû au calife et celui d'avoir une cavalerie noble de 15.000 hommes; aussi confiaient-ils à des Arméniens avec la haute police sur le pays, la levée de cet impôt et le commandement de cette armée. Ils avaient donc, à l'exemple des Perses, nommés parmi les grands arméniens un prince et un généralissime d'Arménie, ou attribué les deux pouvoirs à un seul mandataire.[50]

This book proposes to push further, though, by challenging the assumption of actual administrative continuity through the conquest and Sufyānid periods and by questioning *why* historians writing in both Arabic and Armenian describe Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid rule in the North in similar ways.

This book is not about continuity. The modern concern with continuity skirts closely to the territory of Orientalism. Continuity assumes that Armenia or Albania meant one single thing in particular, enough that they retain relevance even to the modern world. If we constantly search for continuity from Sasanian to caliphal rule, does that not imply that circumstances never changed over the centuries? To assume that things remained unchanged over an extended period of time bleeds innovation and adaptability out of premodern populations for the sake of a master narrative. The Sasanian past meant something specific to people writing in Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. It is this perspective, historicized, that shapes the contours of this book. We do not see continuity so much as the retrojection of continuity.

In this context, it is important to note that the image of both Sasanian and caliphal history that emerges from this book alone is very static. Phrases such as "Sasanian rule" and "caliphal rule" seem de-historicized enough to render them nearly useless; here, though, they refer mainly to how Sasanian and caliphal rule appear in late ninth- and tenth-century

[49] Toumanoff 1971, 114.

[50] Laurent & Canard 1980, 106. Laurent and Canard also explain elsewhere how the Persian and Arab rules in the North were dissimilar; see p. 198.

sources. This generally means late Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid rule, the moments in time that our earliest sources found significant, and the early Sasanian and Sufyānid periods appear far less frequently. It is a very selective version of Sasanian history, one in which centralization plays a large part no matter how decentralized Sasanian rule actually was.[51]

Anūshirwān is inescapable and emerges on the pages of every chapter of this book,[52] but he is rightly Anūshirwān, Arabized, and not the Middle Persian Anōšag-ruwān, "the Immortal Soul." This is because we are not dealing with Sasanian history *per se*, but with the rather murkier realm of Sasanian legacy. The types of things that are relevant to an ʿAbbāsid-era audience dictate which snippets of Sasanian history are preserved. This does not necessarily mean that they were invented or that they represent merely retrojections of later historians, but that the onus falls on us, as modern historians, to approach the sources critically in order to identify the mnemonic drift over time as each generation writes and rewrites history.[53]

The descriptions of society under both Sasanian and caliphal rule also evince deceptively clear-cut religious and cultural divisions.[54] So, for example, both Ełišē's *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* and Łazar P'arpec'i's *History of the Armenians* describe the Persian–Armenian war in

[51] There is a significant debate about whether the Sasanian Empire or early Caliphate were centralized. See Lukonin 1983, 731; Pourshariati 2008 on the Sasanians and Johns 2003; Hoyland 2006 on the Caliphate. There are a number of qualifiers to this question. First, there are regional considerations. The debates about Muʿāwiya's reign, for example, offer some convincing evidence for centralized rule in some provinces, but we would be hard-pressed to extend this into the North. Second, the argument that the "Sasanian Empire" or "Umayyad Caliphate" was or was not centralized cannot always recognize a spectrum of government involvement and the possibility of change over time, or even within the reigns of individual emperors/caliphs.

[52] Rubin 1995, 242, on the "understandable temptation to ascribe everything that the Muslims took over from the Sasanians to Khusro [Anūshirwān] – and to supply missing details about his reform from sources dealing with later periods." On Anūshirwān as an ideal, see Daryaee 2003; Marcotee 1988.

[53] Berger 2012, 16 coined the term "mnemonic drift" with reference to modern examples of the Holocaust and Woodstock, as the memory passes from victims or participants to a generation that never experienced the events. "Every narrative is necessarily selective, including some elements of what was experienced while leaving others out. … As a result, the content of collective memory tends to diverge increasingly from the original experiences. This process of mnemonic drift is compounded by generational change; as each new generation interprets received historical narratives against a background of experiences that are increasingly likely to differ starkly from that of earlier generations." See also Verovšek 2016, 528–9.

[54] Garsoïan 1971, 342: Armenian sources "stress the unity of the Armenian Church, even when this leads them into contradictions."

451 in very clear-cut terms. As Łazar describes it, Vasak Siwni, the prince of Sīsajān/Siwnikʿ and the governor (Armenian: *marzpan*; Georgian: *marzapani*; Middle Persian and Arabic: *marzbān*) of Armenia, teamed up with Mihrnerseh, the "Great Vizier of Iran and non-Iran."[55] Together they convinced the *shāhanshāh* Yazdegerd to force Christians in the North to convert to Zoroastrianism. Both of our fifth-century sources convey this as Zoroastrianism against Christianity, as they describe Vasak as an apostate and the Armenian hero Vardan Mamikonean as the upholder of a "covenant" (*uxt*) between the Armenian, Albanian, and Georgian magnates to protect Christianity. The war, for both Łazar and Ełišē, becomes a broader statement of the unity of Christians in the North, threatened by the disunity sowed by Persian plots.

This traditional narrative hinges on the recognition that Vasak was an apostate and a traitor, but buried under this rhetoric we can see hints that the Armenian nobility was not quite as unified as our sources would have us believe. Ełišē has Vasak trick the Greeks into believing that he was upholding Christianity, deceive "false" priests into condoning his pro-Persian message, and mislead the Armenian people into thinking that he would safeguard the practice of Christianity in the North. The very sources that dismiss Vasak as an apostate and traitor also allow us to navigate around the rhetoric and suppose that perhaps he was in fact Christian, supported by Christian priests, and that perhaps he had every intention of protecting the observance of Christianity. If this is the case, the framework of Zoroastrian versus Christian, Persian versus Armenian, breaks down quickly, making the Persian–Armenian wars a messier moment that pitched some Armenian Christians against other Armenian Christians. Łazar and Ełišē's renderings require the modern historian to believe that Armenian society was unified and united, something that unravels quickly with the closer examination of the extant sources.

This same process appears in relation to the ninth century, as neither "Armenians" nor "Arabs" in the North represent homogenous groups with a single purpose or goal. A tenth-century Armenian source, to which we return in Chapter 4, interprets an ʿAbbāsid military campaign as a reenactment of Avarayr. He replaces Yazdegerd with the ʿAbbāsid caliph Mutawakkil and Mihrnerseh with the caliph's Turkish slave, Bughā l-Kabīr.[56] Yet the power dynamic under the Caliphate cannot be simplified

[55] Ełišē 1982, 77, n. 3: *vzurk hramatar* [Middle Persian: *framādār*] *Eran ew Aneran*, also called "*hazarapet* [Middle Persian: *hazārbad*] of the Aryans and non-Aryans" elsewhere (82); Pʿawstos Buzandacʿi 1989, 544.

[56] See Chapter 4; Garsoïan 1994, 127; Muyldermans 1926; Tʿovma Arcruni 1985a, 46.

with the rhetoric of Armenians versus Arabs, just as it had not been Armenians versus Persians under the Sasanians. Arabic and Armenian sources are clear about this: when Mutawakkil sent Bughā against the North between 851–2 and 855–6, the latter executed local Muslim as well as Christian Armenian leaders and pardoned Armenian Christians as well as local Muslims. When Bughā's troops were arrayed against both Muslims and Christians, his ranks were accompanied by Armenian cavalry. However, rather than dwelling on the fact that some Armenian forces supported the caliphal army and that together they fought Muslim Arabs and Iranians in Armenia and Albania in the ninth century, the Armenian sources linger on the outcome: the Armenians had a chance to recover because the Muslims were busy fighting amongst themselves.[57]

The divide between Armenian and foreign, Christian and non-Christian, remains in our sources about the period of caliphal rule just as it existed under the Sasanians, but it is possible to read against the grain of the Armenian sources to elucidate the divisive nature of Armenian and "Muslim" society. As other examples, we have accounts of numerous Arab and Iranian rebellions against the Caliphate in the North. Bābak's Khurrāmī movement is certainly the most famous,[58] but there were also several other cases, including the creation of an emirate at Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi under Ismāʿīl b. Shuʿayb and his son Isḥāq, who declared independence from the Caliphate in the ninth century.[59] Caliphal rule was an amorphous arrangement, and frequently extremely localized and divisive.

We hear plenty of snippets of a much messier construction of identity in the Sasanian and caliphal North, a fascinating mix of several varieties of identities associated with Arabs, Georgians, Greeks, Khazars, Armenians, Albanians, and Persians, but this is not always part of the larger narrative that our sources construct explicitly. This book is about the Sasanian legacy, or constructed administrative continuity from Sasanian to ʿAbbāsid rule in two provinces, i.e., what the sources want us to believe about the political structure of the North. Accordingly, it also sometimes reflects a constructed identity of "Armenian," "Albanian," and "Georgian," as if these qualifiers mean a single, known thing. It embraces the rhetoric of our authors because the goal is to explicate how people reading and writing in Arabic and Armenian wanted the North to be understood, not to

[57] Laurent & Canard 1980, 134–5; Markwart 1903, 404; note that the rhetoric in Armenian accounts colors how modern historians describe these accounts: Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 44: "The local Arabs had contributed in every way to the advance of Bugha's army."

[58] Crone 2012.

[59] Laurent & Canard 1980, 134–5.

describe the North as it actually was. While this means that we must be careful to specify that this is not really what Sasanian or caliphal rule was in the North, it also allows us to bypass some of the thornier issues of reliability as it pertains to ʿAbbāsid-era sources about earlier periods.[60]

To be clear, it is possible to tell a more nuanced story about the tangle of different ethnic and religious groups in the North, and it may even be possible to tell the story of what really happened in the caliphal North. Presumably, such an endeavor would necessitate a joint force of specialists in material culture, archaeology, and the various literatures relevant to the North: Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, Greek, and Persian. Some threads of actual administrative continuity admittedly appear here, and still more details of actual continuity may in fact be mislabeled as constructed continuity here. Writing the history of the conquest- and Sufyānid-era North *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, though, needs to start with a close look at the expectations, goals, and concerns embedded in our sources. The latter is the goal of this book.

THE NON-MUSLIM NORTH AS ISLAMIC HISTORY

Never Arabized or, in the case of Armenia and Georgia, Islamized, these regions receive little interest in traditional narratives of Islamic history, at least until we touch on Bughā's infamous campaigns or scramble to contextualize the rise of the Ayyūbids or the Safavids. Even the fact that Marwān b. Muḥammad, once governor of the North, became the caliph during the third *fitna* with the help of soldiers from the North rarely garners much more than a footnote. Instead, modern historians typically link Armenia and Georgia to Christian history, examining either their relationship with Byzantium or the golden ages of Armenian and Georgian independence under the Bagratuni/Bagrationi kings. Despite the recent challenges levied against the isolationist approach,[61] there remains a sense of "otherness" in modern sources separating Armenia and Georgia from

[60] Savant 2013b, 136: "The past, as imagined, was typically not a new invention, but an incrementally adjusted recreation that in a variety of ways engaged with the expectations of a reading and listening public."; Noth 1994, 24: "It needs to be recalled that when an account is for various reasons found to misrepresent or color what it claims to report, this is in itself a contribution to historical knowledge – if not the same as what one expected or sought."

[61] See nearly all of Garsoïan's work cited earlier; Greenwood 2012, 102. Historians of Islam have also published on the integration of Christian works (including Armenian) as a part of Islamic history; see Borrut 2011 and Hoyland 2007.

their Muslim neighbors. To add to this, lurking just out of sight are the Ottoman genocide of the Armenians and the more recent territorial disputes between the modern Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. These tinge the discussion with a popular feel, as Armenian, Turkish, and Azeri pundits manipulate medieval history to support modern political claims and brandish historical events as conflicted sites of communal memory.[62]

This book starts with the assumption that the North, as much a part of the Caliphate as the central provinces, can inform the modern scholar about broad trends in Islamic history even though the majority of the population was Christian. If we jettison the Umayyad North from the annals of Islamic history because the majority of its inhabitants were Christians, we would consequently have to accept the fact that Islamic history proper cannot begin until the century after the ʿAbbāsid Revolution, when we finally have evidence of a majority-Muslim population in some provinces of the Caliphate.[63] Islamic history is not just the history of Muslims or Muslim-majority provinces. If it were, Umayyad history *writ large* would cease to qualify as Islamic history.

In the tenth century, the anonymous author of a Persian geographical treatise, *Borders of the World*, wrote that Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan were "the most pleasant places in *dār-i Islām*."[64] As frontiers, the provinces played a formative role in defining the Caliphate from both Byzantium and Khazaria. Famous Arab leaders such as Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Marwān b. Muḥammad, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr, and Hārūn

[62] On the Armenian–Azeri conflict, see later in this chapter. Multiple examples exist of how modern studies intended for a popular audience interpret the significance of caliphal control in light of the Ottoman genocide of the Armenians in the twentieth century. Chalabian 1999, 13, starts off with an authorial preface: "The Armenian nation survived approximately a millennium-and-a-half of Muslim oppression, exploitation, and atrocities. With patience and faith in our cause and national heritage, we bore our cross and pulled through all sorts of trials and tribulations during the centuries. Shall we now give up the struggle and forget about our past, simply because we are better-off economically and no one is persecuting us here for our Christian faith and national aspirations? If we do that, we will make our enemies happy and serve *their* cause, which is the obliteration of the Armenian people from the surface of the earth." The main thesis of Chakmakjian 1965 is that the Ottoman genocide only occurred because the Armenians were unable to convert the Muslim Arabs to Christianity. Finally, Pederian 1993, a book only about caliphal rule in Armenia, ends with a note to the author's intended audience: "To my dear Armenian youth, know well your Armenian history and discover how your ancestors struggled for survival. Unlike many other nations which no longer exist, Armenia survived. Armenia survived the calamities of nature as well as the invasions by hostile neighbors. … Know your immense heritage."

[63] Bulliet 1979.

[64] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1962, 158: این جایهاست بسیار نعمت ترین ناحیتهاست اندر اسلام

al-Rashīd were once governors over the North. We have aniconic Arabic coins minted in both Armenia and Albania and we hear complaints about the weights and measures imposed after the Marwānid Reforms.

M. Bates coined the term "Umayyad North" in his influential article "The Dirham Mint of the Northern Provinces of the Umayyad Caliphate," published in 1989. He explains: "Although the fact is not widely recognized by numismatists or historians, the northern provinces of the Umayyad caliphate – Irmīniyya (Armenia), Arrān, Adharbayjān and often al-Jazīra and al-Mawṣil – constituted a separate administrative sphere corresponding to the better known al-Mashriq, 'the East.' By analogy with 'the East,' it is convenient to label these provinces 'the North,' although no comparable term was used in the medieval texts."[65] The medieval Arabic name for the "North" does exist, though. It is الجربي (*al-jarbī*), from the Syriac ܓܪܒܝܐ (*garbyā*),[66] or North. Presumably, it is not widely known among Islamicists because it appears in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic texts to refer to the North under the Sasanians, not the Umayyads. Further, the comparison with the East is particularly apt, not only due to the way that Arabic sources describe the East, but also because the East is, like the North, formerly Sasanian territory on the edges of both the Iranian *oikoumene* and the Islamic world.

The North as Part of the Islamic World

The majority of the Armenian and Albanian populations remained Christian throughout the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods, so it is not surprising that Islamicists might gloss over the North. How "Islamic" could Armenia or Albania have been with a majority-Christian population in both? They were certainly caliphal provinces after the Marwānid Reforms, but did that change the social and religious structures on the ground?

It seems possible that, despite the lack of information in extant sources, Armenians did in fact convert to Islam, and potentially even in considerable numbers, but Armenian historiography does not easily allow for voluntary conversion from Christianity.[67] Armenians referred to Muslims as *aylazgi*,

[65] Bates 1989, 89.

[66] For references, see "grby, grbyʾ" in the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project hosted by the Hebrew Union College at http://cal.huc.edu/.

[67] Mahé 1997a, 60: "Quiconque refuse d'adhérer à cette confession n'a plus le droit de se dire arménien. Il est moralement et juridiquement privé de sa nationalité." He attributes

literally: someone of another people.[68] To convert to Zoroastrianism or Islam meant rejecting Armenian identity. The exclusion of converts in the works of Armenian history was a conscious decision: as T'ovma Arcruni writes about an apostate, he concludes, "lest I expatiate too long on his shameful error – wicked, selfish, unrepentant, and without scruple – let us eject him from the annals of the princes, since he did not hate the lawless one [անօրէնն, an Armenian epithet for the *shāhanshāh* and the caliph alike] like the shameless one [the devil]."[69] By contrast, Georgian authors mention converts to Zoroastrianism and Islam in passing; they disparage the converts' support for the Sasanian and caliphal administrators in the North, but their conversion itself appears without explicit disapprobation.[70] Most references to Armenian conversion to Islam suggest that the converts chose between martyrdom and apostasy, abandoning everything they were in this life and everything they could be in the next. Converts appear in Armenian histories in order to offset the valor of the martyrs, not to remark on the people who are accepting Zoroastrianism under the Sasanians or Islam under the caliphs.[71]

Arabic historical, geographical, and prosopographical texts occasionally preserve some information about Muslims in the North. Some geographers, Muqaddasī perhaps more than the others, offer a few tantalizing comments about the Muslim community in Armenia. For example, Muqaddasī claims that the Muslims there are Sunnī,[72] mostly Ḥanbalī, except in Dabīl/Duin and a few nearby cities, where they are Ḥanafī.[73] A few geographers, including Muqaddasī, Ibn Ḥawqal, and Yāqūt, mention *ḥadīth* learning and the names of specific Muslim scholars in the North.[74] For instance, Ibn Ḥawqal describes the people of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi

this tendency to the tenth and eleventh centuries, though it stands to reason that this could be projected back.

[68] Thomson 2005, 38: this is biblically inspired and never applied to Persians except in Elišē's account of Avarayr, to compare the Persians to the enemies of Israel.

[69] T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 224, 1985b, 248: և զի մի երկայնեալ որ ինչ վասն սորա ապիրատ և ինքնակամ և անզիղջ և անխիղճ առանց պատկառանաց մոլորութիւն սորա լի անամօթութեամբ՝ ի բաց դիցուք զսա ի միջոյ յիշատակի նախարարացն, զի ոչ եթէ ատեաց զանօրէնն իբրև զանամօթն:

[70] See Lang 1956, 45, on Varsken, the husband of Šušanik; *Martyrdom of King Arč'il* 1996, 252, on the *mt'avari* of Gardaban.

[71] Garsoïan 1994, 130; for examples, see Dasxuranc'i 1983, 319; Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 120–5 and 128–37; Łewond 1857, 196.

[72] Muqaddasī 1906, 373.

[73] Muqaddasī 1906, 378–9: ومذاهبهم مستقيمة الّا ان اهل الحديث حنابلة والغالب بدبيل مذهب ابي حنيفة رحه ويوجدون فى بعض المدن بلا غلبة

[74] Muqaddasī 1906, 379; Yāqūt 1995, I 161 names scholars with the *nisba* al-Armanī as he usually does for other toponyms: وقد نسب بهذه النسبة قوم من اهل العلم

in the following manner: "they are people of pure *sunna* according to the old schools of law (*madhhāhib*), who place importance on the science of *ḥadīth* and esteem those who study it."[75] However, Muqaddasī furnishes a critique of the scientific standards prevalent in Armenia by describing a disputation about Islamic law that he undertook there with Abū ʿAmr al-Khuwāʾī, who had studied under Khurāsānī scholar Abū Naṣr b. Sahl. After commenting on his disagreements, Muqaddasī concludes: "they do not speak about *ʿilm al-kalām* and they do not take sides."[76]

Very little evidence remains about Umayyad- or ʿAbbāsid-era mosques in Armenia or Albania. The ʿAbbāsid-era geographers mention their presence and occasionally their location, but none of these edifices have survived. The mosque of Dabīl/Duin, the Sasanian and caliphal capital of Armenia,[77] is only recognizable by architectural ruins: the columns create a multi-arcade space and traces of a Qurʾānic inscription remain in gypsum, presumably marking the *miḥrāb*.[78] It is likely that this evidence postdates the period of direct caliphal control of the North, since the city suffered a disastrous earthquake in 893–4.[79] It is worth noting, though, that Arabic inscriptions remain today dated to the eighth and ninth centuries in Zuart'noc',[80] a famous Armenian church, raising the question of whether Muslims and Christians shared a place of worship as we see in some places in early Islamic Syria.

Despite the paucity of evidence about Muslims in the North, it would also not be possible while reading Arabic accounts to emerge with the perception that the region was a bastion of Christianity. Ibn al-Faqīh, Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal, Muqaddasī, and Qazwīnī, among others, state that the majority of the population of the North was Christian.[81] However, the general impression from the Arabic and Persian accounts is that Christian life in the North was irrelevant to the Muslim inhabitants, visitors, or traders. It is noteworthy at times, but not burdened by the weight of any

[75] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 340 (account of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi): وهم أهل سُنَّةٍ محضةٍ على المذاهب القديمة يكبّرون علم الحديث ويعظّمون أهله...

[76] Muqaddasī 1906, 379: واما علم الكلام فلا يقولون به ولا يتشيّعون

[77] On the continuity of Dabīl/Duin, see Garsoïan 2012b, 32, n. 27.

[78] K'alant'aryan 1996, 77.

[79] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 62.

[80] Greenwood 2004; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 13; Xač'atryan 1987, n. 6, pl. IV and n. 4, pl. II. While we do not find references to shared sacred places, Łewond (Matenadaran 1902, 16v) refers to a regiment of Ishmaelites who resided overnight in the church of St. Grigor, which frequently but not exclusively refers to Zuart'noc'.

[81] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 343;Iṣṭakhrī 1927,188; Muqaddasī 1906, 374; Qazwīnī 1960, 495.

sustained confessional polemic. J̌anp'oladyan, in describing an artisan's trademark on a glass vessel, remarked:

> Neither the Arabic inscription, nor the name of the glassmaker should confound the investigators of such a multinational town as Dvin. In that town, where Greeks, Arabs, and other Arabic-speaking people who lived side by side with the Armenians and where, according to the testimony of the contemporaries, no one was stirred by the fact that the Christian church and the Moslem mosque stood side by side, the name of the master glassmaker Ali, son of Abdallah, written in Arabic, shouldn't astonish us.[82]

This perception rings true for the written record, as well, since the Arabic sources evince little or no interest in local Christianity.[83] The geographers writing in Arabic use substantially more ink to describe the species of fish found in Armenia than they do for Christianity and churches combined.

The North as Part of Islamic History

While there were certainly Muslims living in Armenia and Albania, they were not Muslim provinces. We should include Armenia and Albania in surveys of Islamic history because there were Arab, Iranian, and Turkish governors on the ground in Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw in the name of the Marwānid and ʿAbbāsid caliphs. They sent out caliphal tax collectors and minted Arabic-Islamic coins in both provinces. The caliphs deployed armies to defend the frontiers of the Islamic world from the Byzantines and, more importantly, the Khazars, placing over their ranks accomplished and renowned Arab, Iranian, and Turkish generals. Muslims built mosques and administrative buildings, as well as networks of knowledge that connected the religious instruction in the North to the broader Islamic world and trade routes that reached from the caliphal centers of power into non-Islamic territory.[84]

Most importantly, we are interested here in how our sources, both the local sources in Armenian and Georgian and the Arabic sources produced in the sectarian milieu outside of Armenia and Albania, understood the provinces' connections to the broader Islamic world. While Armenian sources offer little detail about Islam in the North, the only source to date from this period, Łewond's eighth-century *History*, is an Armenian

[82] J̌anp'oladyan 1974, 52.
[83] See also Crone 1980, 11–12.
[84] On Muslim religious networks, see Vacca 2015; on trade networks, see Manandyan 1965.

history of the Caliphate. The history starts at the death of Muḥammad in 632 and is organized by caliphal reign. Although a modern editor supplied the name *Arab Incursions into Armenia*, the oldest extant manuscript of the book offers the unwieldy title "the History of Łewond, the great *vardapet* of the Armenians, concerning the appearance of Muḥammad and [those who came] after him, how and in what way they ruled the world and, moreover, the Armenian people."[85] Armenia certainly retains its Christian faith and local power structure, but the exposition of these appears in the context of the Islamic world.

The assumption that the North is in fact Islamic territory appears in Arabic sources as well. The geographers of the Balkhī school, who famously do not refer to areas outside of Islam,[86] clearly see the North as Islamic territory, including Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan as a single region. Muqaddasī, for example, wrote that "we only mention the kingdom of Islam and do not speak of the kingdoms of the unbelievers because we did not enter them and so did not see any usefulness [interest?] in mentioning them,"[87] yet he refers to the North as "a region that belongs to Islam" and "a glory to Islam," even specifying that Mount Ararat "is high over Islam."[88] Even if, like Ibn Khurradādhbih or Idrīsī, the Arab and Iranian geographers writing in Arabic do not discuss Muslims living in Armenia or Albania, they do explain the caliphal North through the lens of Islamic history, ensuring that it is depicted in a way that exemplifies its importance to the Islamic narrative. Companions of the Prophet, such as Surāqa b. ʿAmr and Ṣafwān b. Muʿaṭṭal al-Sulamī, were directly involved with the Islamic incursions in the North.[89] Sulamī was martyred during the conquest period and his tomb is located near Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. The earliest governor of the North recorded by Balādhurī was Mughīra b. Shuʿba l-Thaqafī, another Companion of the Prophet.[90]

[85] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation): Պատմաբանութիւն ղևոնդեա մեծի վարդապետի հայոց. որ յաղագս երևելոյն մահմետի. և զկնի նորին: թէ որպէս և կամ որով օրինակաւ տիրեցին տիեզերաց ևս առաւել թէ հայոց ազգիս: This is based on the oldest (thirteenth-century) and most complete extant manuscript of the text, Matenadaran 1902, 3v. The title does not appear as such in Łewond 1857, which provides the title *Aršawankʿ Arabacʿ i Hays*.

[86] Heck 2002, 97; Hopkins 1990, 314.

[87] Muqaddasī 1906, 9: ولم نذكر الّا مملكة الاسلام حسب ولم نتكلّم ممالك الكفّار لانها لم ندخلها ولم نر فائدة فى ذكرها

[88] Muqaddasī 1906, 373: هو اقليم للاسلام; وهو للاسلام فخر; see also Muqaddasī 1906, 380: جبل الحارث متعال على الاسلام.

[89] Balādhurī 1866, 204;Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 287; Ibn Khurradādbih 1889, 123–4; Markwart 1930, 106.

[90] Donner 1981, 215; Laurent & Canard 1980, 409.

We have extremely little information about Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid attachment to the land, but many examples suggest that later ʿAbbāsid-era authors linked the importance of the North to events of the conquest and Umayyad eras. Ibn al-Azraq, the author of the *History of Mayyāfāriqīn*, visited Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband in 1154 and assumed that the Arabs he met there were descendants of the Umayyads involved in the murder of Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet.[91] This connection, linking the North to Islamic history via the Prophet, his family, or his Companions, holds true even later, when historians attempt to parse the title *shamkhal* as the Arabic *Shām* and *khāl*, explaining that a descendant of the Prophet's uncles immigrated to the North via Syria.[92] According to the pilgrimage traditions of the North Caucasus, Abū Muslim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Makkī l-Dimashqī, sometimes confused with the more famous general of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution Abū Muslim, conquered the North and converted its inhabitants to Islam in the Umayyad period.[93]

Another important thread in the descriptions of the caliphal North is reference to early warfare, including the conquests and especially the Arab–Khazar wars. Qazwīnī preserves a fascinating account about Muslim pilgrimage to a mosque near Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, in which the sword of Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik reportedly rested in the *miḥrāb*.[94] As another example, when a Kharijite rebelled in the North, Hārūn al-Rashīd sent the governor of Armenia Yazīd b. Mazyad to defeat him, and the latter's victory was secured by a scimitar that had belonged to both the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[95] From the perspective of ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic histories, the inclusion of the North as part of the broader Islamic world can be traced back to the Prophet, the earliest period of Islamic expansion, and to the swords and scimitars of the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids. These connections to the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions, as well as the location of the sites of pilgrimage

[91] Minorsky 1958, 170–2.

[92] Minorsky 1958, 8–9. NB Bobrovnikov 2006, 43 n. 36: "This explanation of the term *shamkhal* is a pure linguistic fiction, putting Arabic words in a genitive construction of the Lak language."

[93] Bobrovnikov 2006. Layers of this story weave in references to Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik alongside Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī.

[94] Qazwīnī 1960, 508–9: وخارج المدينة تل عليه مسجد في محرابه سيف يقولون: انه سيف مسلمة ابن عبد الملك بن مروان. يزوره الناس لا يزار الّا في ثياب بيض فمن قصده في ثياب مصبوغة جاءت الامطار والرياح وكاد يهلك ما حول التل. وعليه حفّاظ بمنعون من يذهب اليه بالثياب المصبوغة.

[95] Munajjim-Bāshī 1958, 23.

(*ziyāra*), are literary mechanisms designed to tie the periphery into the central stories of Islam and the Caliphate.[96]

Locating the North in Modern Scholarship on Islamic History

The story of Armenia as a province of the Caliphate has been told, and told well, in the past. The first wave of interest in the North started in twentieth-century Europe with publications such as J. Laurent's *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam* (1919), which even today plays a central role in modern understanding of the period of caliphal control in Armenia, especially since M. Canard doubled its length when he republished it in 1980 with extensive notes and translations of relevant Arabic sources. Laurent was building off of earlier interest in the province among German and Armenian scholars writing in German in the first decade of the twentieth century, as M. Ghazarian published "Armenien unter der arabischen Herrschaft bis zur Entstehung des Bagratidenreiches" in 1904; H. Thopdschian produced *Die inneren Zustände von Armenien unter Ašot* in 1904, "Armenien vor und während der Araberzeit" in 1904, and *Politische und Kirchengeschichte Armeniens unter Ašot I und Smbat I* in 1905; and J. Markwart published *Ērānšahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac'i* (1901), *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge* (1903), and *Südarmenien und die Tigrisquellen* (1930). To these, we can certainly add R. Vasmer's slightly later *Chronologie der arabischen Statthalter von Armenien unter den Abbasiden* (1931). Each of these studies relies on the authors' extensive knowledge of Arabic sources, though frequently buttressed by Armenian, Syriac, and Greek. Armenia appears in these works as a caliphal province and in the context of Islamic history.

The next round of significant advances in the study of caliphal Armenia appears in Soviet-era Armenia, where scholars such as A. Ter-Łevondyan and S. Melik'-Baxšyan published works relying on both Armenian and Arabic sources. Ter-Łevondyan's many influential articles, which will crop up in every chapter of this book, have been helpfully collated and published as a single volume, *Hodvacneri žołovacu* (2003); this

[96] See Hanaoka 2016, 7: Using stories of the *ṣaḥāba*, *ahl al-Bayt*, and *ziyāra*, Hanaoka argues that local histories "express a deeply felt desire and need to embed a place into the global *umma* while simultaneously expressing a specifically local identity."

includes a full bibliography of his many works that would be superfluous to duplicate here.[97] Ter-Łevondyan's most famous book, *Arabakan amirayunt'yunnerə Bagratunyac' Hayastanum* (1965), was translated into English by N. Garsoïan as *The Arab Emirates of Bagratid Armenia* (1976) and into Arabic by A. Kashīshiyān as *Al-Imārāt al-ʿarabiyya fī Armīniyya l-Baqrātūniyya* (2003), which may explain why his work has much wider recognition than S. Melik'-Baxšyan's *Hayastanə 7–9 darerum* (1968).

More recently, there was a resurgence of interest in caliphal Armenia in the Arab world from the 1970s to the 1990s, when we find publications such as M. Khaṭṭāb's *Qādat al-fatḥ al-islāmī fī Armīniyya* (1998); F. Iskandar's many works, including *Al-Futūḥāt al-islāmiyya li-Armīniyya* (1983), *Muʾarrikhū l-Arman fī l-ʿuṣūr al-wusṭā* (1983), *Al-Ḥayāt l-iqtiṣādiyya fī Armīniyya ibbān al-fatḥ al-islāmī* (1988), and *Al-Muslimūn wa-l-Bīzanṭiyyūn wa-l-Arman fī ḍawʾ kitābāt al-muʾarrikh al-armanī l-muʿāṣir Sibiyūs* (1993); and, finally, Ṣ. Diyāb's *Al-Muslimūn wa-jihāduhum ḍidda l-Rūm fī Armīniyya* (1984) and *Armīniyya min al-fatḥ al-islāmī ilā mustahall al-qarn al-khāmis al-hijrī* (1978). General trends here include the exposition of the Islamic conquests, the continued battles against Byzantium, and the broader engagement with both Armenian and Arabic historical sources.

All of this scholarly effort demonstrates very clearly that historians in Europe, Armenia, and the Arab world have long recognized that Armenia has a place *within* the history of Islam, as a caliphal province, and that writing this history requires balancing both Arabic and Armenian sources. Yet, recently in the West, the recognition of the ties between Armenia and Byzantium has shifted the focus of the study of eighth- and ninth-century Armenia, such that the most innovative and interesting advances have appeared in the works of Byzantinists or Armenologists. Examples include R. Thomson's studies on Muḥammad and the Baḥīra legends in Armenian literature;[98] N. Garsoïan's *Interregnum* (2012), as well as many of her publications on religious movements and the nobility during the period of caliphal control;[99] T. Greenwood's multiple articles, especially those on Armenian inscriptions and sources such as Sebēos and Łewond;[100]

[97] Ter-Łevondyan 2003, 688–94. Another full bibliography appeared in the *Revue des études arméniennes* following his death in 1988; see Garsoïan & Mahé 1989.

[98] Thomson 1980, 1986, 2014. His introductions and commentary on both T'ovma Arcruni and Mxit'ar Goš are also highly useful, especially for an audience of Islamicists.

[99] Garsoïan 1967, 2004a, 2012a, 2012b.

[100] Greenwood 2000, 2002, 2004, 2012.

J.-P. Mahé's studies of Armenian historiography and the Armenian Church;[101] A. Mardirossian's examination of Armenian canon law;[102] C. Settipani's study of the nobility in the "siècles obscurs";[103] and B. Martin-Hisard's work on Muslim–Christian relations in Armenia and Georgia.[104] With the exception of historians of Armenia such as M. Jinbashian and S. Dadoyan, Arabists have not had considerable showing in the field.[105]

Broadly speaking, Islamicists have abandoned the North, with two significant exceptions. First, the subfield of Islamic numismatics has always embraced Armenia and Albania as part of the Islamic world, such that today we find publications in English, German, and Eastern and Western Armenian tying Armenia to the broader Islamic world through the production and dissemination of aniconic Arabic coins. Second, some recent works relevant to Azerbaijan touch on issues related to Armenia and Albania, such as P. Crone's *Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran* (2012) or F. Amabe's *The Emergence of the ʿAbbāsid Autocracy* (1995). Along these lines, P. Pourshariati's *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (2008) emerges as one of the main works integrating the North into Iranian history. Its implications stretch far beyond the Sasanian period; we will return to this in the conclusion. One of the goals of this book, then, is to continue the process of returning Armenia into the fold of mainstream Islamic history, thereby opening a dialog with Armenologists and Byzantinists interested in collaborative work on the eighth- and ninth-century North.

The study of Caucasian Albania has also had a long history, though it is certainly more mysterious and mired in political maneuvering. Unlike the rich Armenian tradition, we do not have histories in Albanian left today. In fact, it was only recently that scholars discovered palimpsests that preserve the Albanian language. These are seventh-century biblical and religious texts, apparently dependent at least in part on an Armenian original.[106] Before this discovery, our only knowledge of the written Albanian script was from a single table including the Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian alphabets side by side.[107] Movsēs Dasxuranc'i compiled his

[101] Mahé 1992, 1993, 1997a, 1997b.
[102] Mardirossian 2000, 2004.
[103] Settipani 2006.
[104] Martin-Hisard 1982, 1997.
[105] Dadoyan 2011; Jinbashian 2000.
[106] Gippert & Schulze 2007; Gippert et al. 2008.
[107] Minorsky 1958, 12; see also Kurdian 1956.

History of the Albanians in Albania and about Albanian history in the tenth century,[108] but he composed it in Armenian even though we know from Ibn Ḥawqal that Albanian was still the dominant language in Albania in the tenth century.[109]

Further, unlike the study of medieval Armenia, modern works on Albanian history are not typically composed in or translated into English, French, or German. Some of the earlier works about Albania published out of Europe include studies relevant to both Dasxuranc'i and Albanian history, most notably the publications of Caucasiologists and Armenologists C. Toumanoff, A. Manandian, and C. J. F. Dowsett, and, particularly important from the perspective of Islamic history, Arabists J. Markwart and V. Minorsky. Yet most of the studies on Albania appear in Russian, by historians such as Z. Bunijatov, S. Eremyan, A. Krymskij, K. Trever, S. Juškov, and A. Šanidze, and in Armenian, by P. Akinean, M. Barxudaneanc', and A. Mnac'akanyan, among others.[110]

Several of these studies have been pulled into Soviet-era and more recent political debates about the ethnogenesis of the Azeri people and the "correct" political boundaries between the present-day Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, to the point that some readers deny that Albanians ever really existed. Were the Albanians really just Armenians? Where was the boundary between Armenia and Albania? Was the Armenicization of Albania a deliberate policy to quash Albanian identity? Close to the surface here is a modern territorial dispute about Nagorno-Karabagh. This has prompted the suggestion that the scholarship in the West might lend a more impartial reading of extant sources, but the political ramifications of the Armenian–Azeri conflict leave traces in the publications of some scholars in the West, as they themselves point out.[111]

One point deserves further investigation here, though. Z. Bunijatov and others have insisted on understanding Albanians as one of three main cultural groups in the South Caucasus, equal in antiquity and culture to the Armenians and Georgians. The counterargument stresses the use of

[108] The most significant studies of Dasxuranc'i have been focused on identifying the earlier strata of sources that the compiler drew together, frequently with little or no tampering, into a single history in the tenth century. This book does not contribute to these broader discussions, looking at Dasxuranc'i's *choices* in compilation as evidence for the tenth century. Even though the sources he drew on were early, presumably Dasxuranc'i preserved them because they were pertinent and useful in his own day. See Greenwood 2000; Howard-Johnston 2002; Zuckerman 2007.

[109] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 348–9; Muqaddasī 1906, 378.

[110] See Anassian 1969.

[111] Anassian 1969; Dudwick 1990; Hewsen 1982; Hitchins 1984, 242–3.

the Armenian language and the Christianization of Albania via Armenia as indicators of an Albano-Armenian culture, intertwined with and inseparable from its neighbors. An alternative, following C. Toumanoff, is to see Albania as an extension of Iran, comparable to the position of Egrisi in regards to Byzantium.[112] However, Toumanoff also exposes how external sources apply imprecise words to imagine the complex Armenian and Georgian political structures. It is only, he argues, with the exposition of Armenian and Georgian sources that we learn of the complexities of Caucasian society.[113] Without such sources available for Albania, any decisions about the development of Albanian society must be considered premature.

For our purposes here, focusing from the perspective of Islamic history, it is important to recognize that Bardhʿa/Partaw, Bardavi in Georgian, was very likely *more* prominent in the period of direct caliphal rule than Dabīl/Duin or Tiflīs/Tpʻilisi. The Sasanian capital, known as Pērōzabād in Middle Persian, became the seat of the caliphal governors of the North, appearing more regularly than Dabīl/Duin in Arabic sources.[114] In the Umayyad period, it served as the administrative hub and the base of military operations against the Khazars. Dasxuranc'i notes that "as they established the main seat of their authority in Damascus of the Syrians, so here in Albania they set up their courts in Partaw and sucked the riches of the country dry."[115] In the ʿAbbāsid period, the frequent forays against the Ṣanāriyya/Canarkʻ were organized from Bardhʿa/Partaw. This certainly cannot speak to the complexity of Albanian society or the relationship between Albania and Armenia, but it does suggest that Albania was in no way secondary in importance vis-à-vis Armenia. We simply lack adequate sources to come to a more nuanced interpretation.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

While this book focuses on the construction and manipulation of historical accounts, it shies away from modern political disputes and nationalist agendas in favor of the tenth century. It does not attempt to tell the story

[112] Toumanoff 1954, 113–14, 1963, 84.
[113] Toumanoff 1963, 107.
[114] Nicol 1979, 120, for Bardhʿa/Partaw v. Dabīl/Duin as a seat of government.
[115] Dasxuranc'i 1961, 213, 1983, 325: Եւ որպէս զառաջինն աթոռ իշխանութեանն իւրեանց արկին ի Դամասկոս Ասորեստանեայց, նոյնպէս աստ յԱղուանս նստուցին ի Պարտաւ կալ արքունեացն և ծծել զպարարտութիւն երկրիս.

of "what really happened" in the caliphal North in the eighth and ninth centuries. Instead, it eschews the chronological narrative and focuses on themes such as frontiers, leadership, and taxation in order to examine how traditions change over time and how they are relevant to the historians recording them.

Mnemohistory and Islamic History

As modern historians, we must approach the extant sources with the political, social, and religious milieux of their authors firmly in mind. History is malleable, and the fact that the history of the North in the eighth and ninth centuries relies nearly entirely on post-Samarran texts dictates the framework of this study.

The only Armenian source written in the period of caliphal rule in Armenia is Łewond's *History*. While Sebēos's *History* is also particularly useful, it cuts off during the first *fitna* and as such predates the period of direct caliphal control over the North, which can only be dated to the Marwānid Reforms ca. 700. The Georgian *History of King Vaxtʿang Gorgasali* and its continuation (ca. 800) joins Łewond as another source from the period of direct rule under the ʿAbbāsids. By contrast, the earliest Arabic sources relevant to the North, such as the histories of Yaʿqūbī, Balādhurī, and Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, date to the late ninth century, after the rise to power of the Bagratuni kingdom. Ibn Aʿtham, whose *Book of Conquests* is difficult to date but may well be earlier (potentially even the early ninth century, i.e., from the period of direct ʿAbbāsid rule over the North), is the exception to this rule. His information about the North is unique, if somewhat garbled, compared to other Arabic histories, and potentially closer to Armenian sources.[116] Accordingly, we rely mostly on sources composed after the North was no longer directly controlled by caliphal representatives and, as J. Meisami notes, "each age rewrites the past in the image of its present."[117]

The question looming conspicuously throughout this book is whether we can speak with any degree of certainty about conquest- and Umayyad-era Armenia and Albania. How can we gauge the legacy of the conquests and Umayyads when we are left with texts exclusively from the

[116] Ckit'išvili 1985; Conrad 2015; Lo Jacono 1988; see below on the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand.
[117] Meisami 1993, 247.

ʿAbbāsid period? If ʿAbbāsid rule in the North sounds a lot like Sasanian rule, is this an indicator of continuity, the perception of continuity, or the construction of continuity? It is not always entirely clear whose concerns are indicated in "'Abbāsid-era"[118] texts in Arabic. This is not something that can be answered briefly by way of introduction. In each chapter, we will see elements that hint at actual continuity and details that instead suggest the deliberate retrojection of continuity. There *are* details about that Umayyad North that we can ascertain from ʿAbbāsid-era sources, but we must examine the available sources individually to assess the motives and methods of ʿAbbāsid-era historical writing.

By differentiating between actual administrative continuity and constructed administrative continuity, we look at how traditions evolve to suit the concerns and needs of a later generation of historians. There are two significant ways to tie the study of memory specifically to the case of caliphal rule in the North: forgetting the Byzantine past and creating an Iranian present. These provinces were frontiers, hotly contested territories, and claimed by Byzantium, the Caliphate, and the Khazars, let alone the local Arab *amīr*s, the Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian noble families, and the Iranian (Daylamī, Jīlī, and Persian) élite around the Caspian. Caliphal claims to legitimacy had to be credible and range beyond military might. After all, Byzantine armies could – and did – take back land along the frontier in the tenth century. Writing history with the Sasanian experience in mind adds a layer of legitimacy to caliphal rule. The caliphs could claim Armenia and Albania specifically because they fashioned themselves as the heirs to the Sasanian *shāhanshāh*s. As the North was once Sasanian territory, so too was it caliphal territory. While Armenia was likewise once Byzantine territory, the details of Greek rule are unremembered or rewritten in Arabic texts because they serve no political purpose.

Islamicists have long recognized the significance of memory in writing Islamic history.[119] The concern about memory is part of a broader movement to navigate the concerns of the skeptic movement and to write early

[118] We use "'Abbāsid-era" here to refer to anything from 750 to 1258, in an attempt to avoid assigning a relationship between the ʿAbbāsid family and developments during the period of its reign. So, for example, Łewond's *Patmabanut'iwn*, while it was written in the ʿAbbāsid period, has no connection to the ʿAbbāsid family and, accordingly, cannot be considered an ʿAbbāsid text. Similarly, many of the Arabic texts were written after the effective collapse of ʿAbbāsid power.

[119] Studies that look at memory from the perspective of early Islamic history include Borrut & Cobb 2010; Cheddedi 1991; Daftary & Meri 2003; Décobert 1990; El-Hibri 2002; Keany 2003; Lassner 1986.

Islamic history through source- and tradition-critical lenses. Most of the chapters in this book in particular follow what F. Donner has dubbed the tradition-critical approach, which he traces back to I. Goldziher's study of *ḥadīth*. While this approach embraces the idea that any historical account available to us today may indeed contain a "kernel of truth," it also recognizes that an account may have "evolved over time (and, in part at least, orally) and naturally shows the impact of political, theological, social, and other issues that were important not at the time of the event the accounts are supposedly describing (e.g. the life of the Prophet), but only at some time during the long period when the tradition was being transmitted."[120] Donner associates this approach with M. J. Kister, A. Noth, and E. Petersen, among others.

The study of memory also finds fertile ground with the more skeptic experts in early Islamic history. T. El-Hibri's *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography* (1999) explains that "historians repeatedly find themselves facing the multiple challenge [*sic*] of trying to read through biases that accumulated over time, with successive episodes tinging the original memory of how things really happened."[121] He asserts that the preservation of some traditions and not others cannot have been a wholly random process, and that the logic behind historical transmission cues us into the concerns of our transmitters. The modern historian, then, must approach historical accounts as "multilayered narratives" that reveal as much about the different layers of transmission as they do about the historical event itself. He starts off with the provocative claim that a careful study of sources about Hārūn al-Rashīd, arguably the most famous ʿAbbāsid caliph, will yield not more than a few pages of material on his life. We are left instead with "a carefully crafted tale" to unravel.[122]

This concern about layered history and successive redrafting dovetails neatly with the broader discussions of memory farther afield. Recent studies, particularly those by A. Borrut and S. Savant, have made significant strides in bringing this theoretical framework of mnemohistory into dialog with the works about memory in Islamic history. After first identifying the Syrian transmitters of the Umayyad period, Borrut's *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: l'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides* (2011) analyzes the ʿAbbāsid-era texts available about Umayyad Syria to discern the "filtres historiographiques" applied to a

[120] Donner 1998, 15.
[121] El-Hibri 1999, 11.
[122] El-Hibri 1999, 21.

body of literature produced after the period of Umayyad rule and, for the most part, outside of Syria. He identifies the reconstruction of historical traditions into a "vulgate historiographique," produced in the aftermath of the abandonment of Samarrāʾ, in which the Syrian sources are liminal. The significance of Borrut's study for our purposes here is his exploration of *lieux de mémoire*, the development of traditions about specific episodes or people not only in Arabic literature, but also in the Christian languages of the Near East, which he establishes as internal to Islamic history.

S. Savant's *New Muslims of Post-conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (2013) is also a particularly useful point of comparison because she examines the formation of traditions about the Persians and their place in early Islamic history from a mnemohistorical perspective. She examines "how the post-conquest descendants of the Persian imperial, religious, and historiographical traditions wrote themselves into starkly different early Arabic and Islamic accounts of the past."[123] In particular, she argues that conversion to Islam informed how Iranians interpreted and rewrote historical traditions. Savant notes that "in writing about history – including their history before the conquests – Muslims were engaged in an effort to make sense of Islam in the changing and multireligious communities in which they lived."[124] Accordingly, the descriptions of Sasanian and early Islamic history are informed by the negotiation of identity and, in particular, by the conversion of the majority of the Iranian population to Islam.

Savant's thesis is intriguing for our purposes because this conversion to Islam never happened in the North, where the populations of Armenia and Albania remained Christian throughout the period of direct caliphal control and well past the composition of our central histories and geographies. In the outskirts of the *oikoumene*, conversion to *Christianity* instead fueled pre-Islamic layers of historiography and informed the Georgian and Armenian responses to *Sasanian* rule. There was no documented widespread conversion in the early Islamic period that might help explain how Armenians, Iranians, Arabs, Georgians, and Albanians negotiated the past in the caliphal North.

This book instead looks at Iranian expressions of power in the tenth century as central to understanding the writing and rewriting of traditions about the Sasanian and caliphal North. In our case, the prompt was not religious, but rather political. After the so-called Decade of Anarchy, the

[123] Savant 2013b, 3.
[124] Savant 2013b, 5.

ʿAbbāsids were never able to regain effective control over the North and its rulers reigned as tributary but independent Iranian kings. This changed the way that historians and geographers wrote about the North, prompting them to revisit the most demonstrably Iranian thing that secured the North as an integral part of the *oikoumene*: the Sasanians.

Complicating the Chronology

While it makes sense to start our inquiry with a brief narrative introduction to Armenia and Albania in the late Sasanian, Umayyad, and early ʿAbbāsid periods, this task is very probably impossible or, at least, would require a volume in and of itself. If we center our argument on the idea that traditions develop over time and that these changes reflect the perspectives and concerns of later authors, it becomes particularly difficult to elucidate enough about "what really happened" to write a narrative history. Every time we encounter discrepancies between the sources, we must be able to explain why one version is to be preferred over the other. Presumably, many variants are "correct" in that they serve to buttress the authors' goals and motives for writing and recording history.

A clear example of this problem is the variety of accounts about the fires at Nashawā/Naxčawan. Sometime at the end of the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik or in the beginning of the reign of Walīd, in 696, 703, 704, or 705, the Armenians rebelled against caliphal rule and joined forces with Byzantium. Muḥammad b. Marwān, the brother or uncle of the reigning caliph, defeated these forces and moved north to quash the Armenian rebels. He called them to gather in Nashawā/Naxčawan, Xram, Khilāṭ/Xlatʿ, or just somewhere in Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan, locked them in the churches, and burned them (or maybe just their troops) alive. Some sources only mention that he "set fire to Armenia."

Although there are accounts of this same event in Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, and Greek, they do not agree on the year, the caliph, the location, the victims, the caliphal representatives, their motives, the Armenian response, or the identity of the captives. Historians preserving this material in Arabic had a specific audience in mind, one that did not overlap the expected audience of Armenian authors. Reading this event in order to ascertain "what really happened" is missing the point. We have no reliable way to determine what happened thirteen centuries ago, and the value of such knowledge is dubious anyway. No matter what year or which towns were involved, Armenia burned and it resonated with multiple groups in

different ways. This resonance informs us more than the certainty or reliability of any particular detail. Telling the story of the fires at Nashawā/Naxčawan, let alone explaining why these fires are significant in the story of the Marwānid North, requires more than a brief reading or a passing mention.[125]

This is a particularly complicated example because the event was so widely recorded and the accounts have been manipulated over the centuries. What, then, do we make of events and personalities that appear only in Arabic or only in Armenian? Some of the most celebrated moments of the Armenian narrative are completely missing in the Arabic. This includes the Battle of Warthān/Vardanakert in or around 703, when Armenians routed the caliphal army and attempted to kill the surviving soldiers. This prompted one of the most famous episodes in the history of caliphal Armenia, when the catholicos Sahak journeyed to meet with Muḥammad b. Marwān. The catholicos's piety and devotion to his people impressed the Arab general so much that the latter granted the Armenians a writ of protection (*amān*) and clemency for the deaths of the troops who fell at Warthān/Vardanakert. Yet this story is lodged solely in Armenian historiography, starting with Łewond's *History*; it is not part of the story that we find in Arabic sources.

The same could be said of the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand in 775 when caliphal forces defeated an Armenian army led by the Mamikonean family. This receives some notice, brief statements about the death of Mushā'il al-Armanī, which renders Mušeł Mamikonean ("the Armenian") in Arabic sources, but not enough to tell what happened or to gauge its historical significance.[126] The only detailed explanation of the battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand in Arabic is somewhat confused, referring to Mūshābidh, a corruption of Mushā'īl to render Mušeł, and claims among his supporters Ḥamra [read: Ḥamza] b. Jājīq, i.e., Hamazasp son of Gagik Arcruni, the patrician of Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan, whom Ibn Aʿtham identifies as the Lord of Georgia (*ṣāḥib Jurzān*) [!].[127] If we accept that "the

[125] Vacca 2016.

[126] Laurent & Canard 1980, 128; Toumanoff 1963, 154, place the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand on April 25, 772. Łewond clarifies that the battle took place in the last year of the caliph Manṣūr, or 775. This is corroborated in Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-futūḥ,* which dates the rebellion to 158 AH.

[127] Ibn Aʿtham 1975, VIII 366ff. The reference to Hamazasp as the Lord of Georgia may well relate to the fact that Ibn Aʿtham claims that Hamazasp rebelled against Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba, who was responsible for administering Tiflīs/Tpʿilisi for his father. In other words, this is logic internal to Ibn Aʿtham's narrative: he knew that Ibrāhīm was responsible for Tiflīs/Tpʿilisi and that Hamazasp had rebelled against Ibrāhīm, but he did not know who Hamazasp was and so assumed that he was Georgian. Ibn Aʿtham

aftermath of the battle of Bagrewand marked one of the darkest hours in Armenian history,"[128] we must recognize that this relies solely on the testimony of Armenian sources.

While these narratives clearly resonate in an Armenian milieu, they do not surface in Arabic and accordingly remain as yet another reminder to the modern historian that the audiences and goals of these Arabic histories are certainly not the same as what survives in Armenian or Georgian. Surely, omitting the Battle of Warthān/Vardanakert, for example, discards an important part of the Armenian narrative, but to include it would simultaneously skew the perception of the period in Arabic sources, which breeze over this without a word. Writing a few pages of introduction is therefore also sectarian, as it requires choosing whose narrative we will tell and whose concerns our choices will reflect.

Abandoning the elusive chronological narrative allows us to look at recurrent themes that crop up frequently in Arabic historical and geographical works, to strike a better balance between the Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian sources, and to discuss what brings these distinct groups of texts into dialog. If we trace how reports change over time, we can speculate about why these stories were significant at different times and to different audiences. So in lieu of a detailed narrative of the eighth- and ninth-century North, we offer only a few simplified generalizations that find support in both Armenian and Arabic historical traditions. Armenia and Albania first saw Muslim troops in the Rāshidūn period.[129] Arabic and Armenian sources detail the peace treaties, probably leaving the North as a tributary neighbor, loosely affiliated on and off with one of its two powerful neighbors, the Caliphate or Byzantium. The region could hardly be considered caliphal territory until the Marwānid Reforms, in the few years before and after the turn of the eighth century,[130] around the time of the aforementioned fires in Nashawā/Naxčawan. Arabic-Islamic coins were struck in the regions, caliphal governors and tax collectors arrived to stay in the provincial capitals of Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw, and caliphal

frequently offers significant information that differs from other Arabic sources on the North. See Ckit'išvili 1985; Conrad 2015; Lo Jacono 1988. On the relationship between Ibn Aʿtham and Łewond on the battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand, see Vacca, "Khurāsānī and Transoxanian Ostikans in early ʿAbbāsid Armenia" (forthcoming, 2018).

[128] Garsoïan 2004a, 132.

[129] Kaegi 1994, 181–204; Manandyan 1948; Ter-Łevondyan 1986.

[130] This is traditionally dated to the appointment of Muḥammad b. Marwān as governor over the North. He went on two campaigns in the North; see Vacca 2016. His governorship started sometime between the second *fitna* and the start of Walīd's reign. See Laurent & Canard 1980, 412–15.

armies were stationed in the North to protect the frontiers. While Arabic and Armenian sources record multiple rebellions of Iranians, Armenians, Arabs, and Albanians against the Caliphate, the region appears in extant sources mainly as a frontier against Byzantium and Khazaria. Sources in Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, and Greek repeatedly record Khazar raids and caliphal campaigns against the Khazars, making the Arab–Khazar wars one of the most significant points to herald as a common concern across the various Near Eastern historiographical traditions.

Armenians were well aware of the implications of the black banners unfurling in the East, and Łewond, probably writing in the 780s, notes the ʿAbbāsid blood relation to the Prophet Muḥammad, the role of "the sons of Hešm" (banū Hāshim), the significance of Khurāsānī troops, and the primacy of "Kahatʻba and a certain Abu Mslim, who was cunning in astrological sorcery."[131] The ʿAbbāsid Revolution barely makes an impression in the North, although it is probable that the lieutenants of Marwān b. Muḥammad, the last Umayyad caliph and former governor of the North, relied on Qaysī tribesmen from the North when they faced the Khurāsānī army at Zāb.[132] The ʿAbbāsids appointed a number of highly influential leaders over the North, usually either Jazarī or Khurāsānī, but they (and particularly their taxation policies) were not well loved. Still, it is not until the reign of Mutawakkil (r. 847–61) that we reach a breaking point. Mutawakkil's reign saw the disastrous campaigns of Bughā l-Kabīr, a Turkish slave in the service of the caliph who arrived to remind the Muslim and Christian leaders of the North alike that they were subject to the rule and the whim of the caliph.

The loss of direct caliphal control over the North can be narrowed down to a specific year: The Sharwānshāhs and the Layzanshāhs in Albania became independent "when in 247/861 disturbances broke out after the murder of al-Mutawakkil."[133] Bāb al-Abwāb claimed independence only a few years later in 869, and again our main local history in Arabic explicitly attributes this independence to the turmoil after the

[131] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 93r: կացուցանէր զաւրավարս ի վերա նոցա. զկահաթբա և զաբու մսլիմ ոմն որ էր խորամանգ յաստեղագիտական աղանդն; Łewond 1857, 156.

[132] This is admittedly not attested in Arabic and Armenian sources. It is an assumption based on the reading of Ṭabarī about the red-clothed men (*muḥammira*) in the army of Marwān. Łewond mentions a Qaysī tribesman in the North wearing red.

[133] Munajjim-Bāshī 1958, 26 in English and 4 in Arabic: ولمّا وقع الهرج بقتل المتوكّل في سنة ٢٤٧ استبدّ الهيثم بأمر شروان; see also 5 in Arabic: ذلك أن الهيثم بن خالد لمّا استبدّ بأمر شروان استقلّ أخوه يزيد بن خالد يزيد بأمر ليزان فلقّب الهيثم بشروانشاه وأخوه يزيد بليزانشاه.

murder of Mutawakkil.[134] The so-called Decade of Anarchy after the death of Mutawakkil also saw the rise of the Bagratuni family, should we count Ašot Bagratuni's elevation to prince of Armenia in 862 as such. They formed a kingdom of their own in 884, followed only slightly later by the Bagrationis in Georgia in 888 and the Arcrunis in Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan in 908. With the rise of the local Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian kingdoms, we enter into the Iranian intermezzo, which, as discussed earlier, we should understand broadly as a moment when Muslim and Christian Iranian families controlled the provinces that had once belonged to the Sasanian Empire.

The Trajectory

This book explores the expressions of Iranian power in Arabic and Armenian descriptions of caliphal rule in the North. There are five main chapters, including two on administrative geography and three on administration.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on administrative geography, specifically the appearance of Armenia and Albania in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic geographical treatises. Chapter 2, "Whence the Umayyad North?" rejects the idea that Byzantine administrative paradigms informed the definition of the provinces of the caliphal North and their relationship one to the other. It also raises some problems with the traditional argument that caliphal representatives organized Armenia, Georgia, and Albania into a single province with the name Armenia. Instead, building on the work of A. Ter-Łevondyan,[135] this chapter forwards the idea that the models of ʿAbbāsid-era geographies, and particularly those of the Balkhī school, are Sasanian, rather than Byzantine or Armenian.

Chapter 3, "Lost Greek Kings and Hoodwinked Khazars" continues the discussion of administrative geography by focusing on the descriptions of the frontiers against Byzantium and Khazaria in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic geographical treatises. This chapter challenges the assumption that the North constituted a buffer zone between Islam and its neighbors.

[134] Munajjim-Bāshī 1958, 41 in English and 16 in Arabic: فكانت الأمراء يتناوبون عليها من قبل الخلفاء الأموية ثم العباسية إلى أن تولّاها هاشم بن سُراقة السُلمي (بالولاء) في سنة 255 فاستبدّ بأمرها ثم ملكها أولاده واحداً بعد واحد; this is explicitly linked to the death of the caliph Mutawakkil on the next page, 42 in English and 17 in Arabic: ولمّا اختلّ نظام الخلفاء بعد قتل المتوكّل بتغلّب مواليهم الأتراك على أمورهم اجتمع أهل الباب وغزاة الثغور فأمّروه على أنفسهم.

[135] Ter-Łevondyan 1958, 1968.

In particular, it elucidates the Iranian nature of the stories that built the frontier, as Sasanians appear and Byzantines disappear in the foundation narratives of Qālīqalā/Karin (modern: Erzurum) and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. The significance of the Sasanian frontier suggests that a comparative approach to the caliphal frontiers in Iran, specifically the North and the East (Khurāsān and Transoxania), provides useful insights to the study of the North due to the lasting significance of Iranian cosmography in ʿAbbāsid-era geographical texts.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 turn from administrative geography to caliphal administration of the North, relying on histories in both Armenian and Arabic. Chapter 4, "The So-Called Marzbāns and the Northern Freemen," demonstrates that both Arabic and Armenian sources portray local leadership as a continuation of the norms of Sasanian rule. It considers three different levels of leadership in the North: the Sasanian and caliphal governors; presiding princes of Armenia, Georgia, and Albania; and the local nobility. By looking at the titles, roles, and incumbents of these positions, we can see how authors of the tenth century described caliphal rule by drawing on a long history of close relations between Armenians, Georgians, Albanians on the one hand and the broader Iranian world (especially Parthian families) on the other. In particular, this chapter argues that the way people described legitimacy during the Iranian intermezzo informed the description of caliphal rule in Arabic and Armenian texts.

Chapter 5, "Caliphs, Commanders, and Catholicoi," continues the discussion of caliphal administration in Armenia and Albania by examining the mechanisms of rule under Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphs and by evaluating whether these same mechanisms appear in relation to the Sasanian period in the North. Caliphal rule was largely decentralized, but punctuated by moments of centralizing policies. Armenians and Albanians stridently guarded their own independence vis-à-vis the outside élite. This chapter examines Sasanian and caliphal policy as described by Armenian sources by looking at the governors' and caliphs' goals and expectations for the masses (Persian/Arab immigration and Armenian emigration), the political élite (fostering disunity), and the religious élite (safeguarding a non-Chalcedonian Christianity with Sasanian and Islamic law). While some tenth-century Armenian and Arabic texts describe caliphal rule in line with Sasanian legacy and in contrast to Byzantine antecedents, these tend to rely on Sasanian-era sources as models for describing caliphal rule.

Chapter 6, "Taxing the Dead and Sealing the Necks of the Living," joins the ongoing discussion about authenticity and historicity of Arabic treaties, focusing specifically on fiscal arrangements. It proposes two

main periods of caliphal taxation: the North was a vassal state to the Caliphate before the Marwānid Reforms, followed by a push for centralization and caliphal representatives more directly involved in taxation in the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods. Given the significant break represented by the Marwānid Reforms, it is difficult to imagine caliphal taxation policies as a continuation of Sasanian norms. Instead, this chapter explains the common ground in descriptions of Sasanian and caliphal taxation by a sustained engagement with Iranian social mores, if not Sasanian fiscal practice, in both Armenian and Syriac sources.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main points about the memory of caliphal rule in the North before returning to the Iranian intermezzo. In particular, it reexamines some of the Sasanian-isms found throughout this book to challenge how we define the Sasanian legacy. This chapter suggests that we complicate the Iranian intermezzo by recognizing the lasting significance of Parthian influence in both the North and the East. Some of the Sasanian expressions of power in the tenth and eleventh centuries may very well serve to tie Armenia, Georgia, and Albania to an explicitly Iranian setting, drawing on Parthian in lieu of Persian antecedents.

2

Whence the Umayyad North?

Byzantine, Sasanian, and Caliphal Administrative Geography of the North

The study of the North gets a rocky start because it is particularly difficult to describe the region geographically. Very broadly speaking, Arabic sources refer to modern-day eastern Turkey and Armenia as Armenia, eastern Georgia and Azerbaijan as Albania, and northwestern Iran as Azerbaijan. Modern historians must contend with a dizzying array of Byzantine administrative districts, Armenian and Georgian toponyms, Persian provinces, multiple layers of conflicting inheritances in Arabic literature, and a plethora of petty local kingdoms in the Caucasus. Many of the terms such as Interior and Exterior Armenia appear in Greek, Armenian, and Arabic literature, although not always to refer to the same regions. The Romano-Byzantine Greater Armenia does not necessarily correspond to the same land as the Armenian Mec Hayk‘ or the Arabic Armīniyya l-kubrā, even if the titles are direct translations. Furthermore, the administrative units were flexible, so that there were multiple incarnations of any one of them. Armenia I was not the same under Justinian and Maurice, so we should hardly expect it to arrive unchanged in Arabic as Armīniyya l-ūlā.

To preempt the confusion of multiple definitions of each toponym, we refer here to provinces based on their definitions in Arabic geographical treatises. Although not all Arabic texts divide the provinces in the same way,[1] we can generalize about the views of the Balkhī school as follows:

[1] For example, Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 336, lists Warthān and Baylaqān in Azerbaijan, while both cities appear as part of Albania later in the same work. Muqaddasī 1906, 374, places Marāgha, Khuwī, and Urmiyya in Armenia, though not all of the other geographers do so.

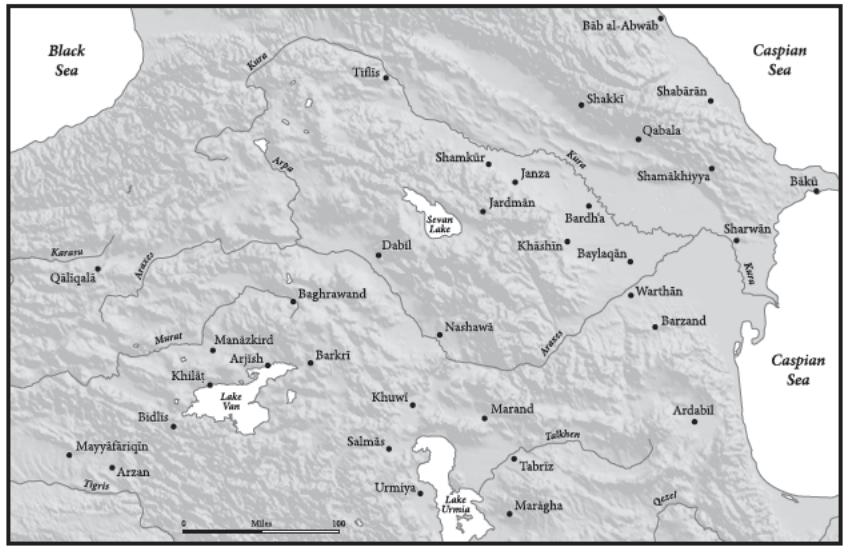

FIGURE 2.1 Map of Armenia and Caucasian Albania.

Albania	Bāb al-Abwāb/Dərbənd, Bardhʿa/Bərdə, Baylaqān/Beylagan, Janza/Ganjak, Khunān/Xunan, Qabala/Qəbələ, Shabarān/Şabran, Shakkī/Şəki, Shamākhiyya or Shamakha/Şamaxı, Shamkūr/Şəmkir, Sharwān/Şirvan, Tiflīs/Tpʻilisi.
Armenia	Arjīsh/Arčēš, Arzan/Arcn, Baghrawand/Bagrewand, Barkrī/Berkri, Bidlīs/Bałeš, Dabīl/Duin, Khilāṭ/Xlatʻ, Manāzkird/Manazkert, Mayyāfāriqīn/Npʻrkert, Nashawā/Naxčawan, Qālīqalā/Karin, Sirājṭayr/ Shirak and Taykʻ.
Azerbaijan	Ardabīl, Tabrīz, Khunāj, Warthān, Mūqān, Urmiyya, Barzand, Salmās, Marand, Khuwī, Mīmadh, Marāgha.

Eastern Georgian cities and cities along the Georgian–Albanian border, while part of the caliphal province, appear in the texts of the Balkhī geographers such as Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal, and Muqaddasī as part of Albania. The lines between the three provinces certainly fluctuated. As the anonymous tenth-century geography *Borders of the World* states, "their countrysides enter into each other."[2]

Despite the appearance of Byzantine toponyms, Arabic geographical works, particularly those of the Balkhī school, describe the administrative geography of the caliphal North based on Sasanian antecedents. The numismatic and textual evidence demonstrates common ground between

[2] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 142, 1962, 157–8: سه ناحیتست بیکدیگر پیوسته وسوادهاءیشان بیکدیگر اندر شده

Sasanian geographical paradigms and those evident in the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods, although we do not have sufficient data from the conquest and Sufyānid periods to argue that this reflects actual administrative continuity instead of the retrojection of such continuity.

Here we consider four main issues: the forgetting of Byzantine administrative geography in Arabic sources; the argument for a super-Armenia including Armenia, Albania, and Georgia; Persian administration of the North based on Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid-era texts; and, finally, the caliphal adaptation of Sasanian administrative geography in the North with the combination of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan. This chapter therefore touches on issues of defining Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan, but more importantly, also grapples with the connection between the provinces of the North. Caliphal rule rarely isolated any one of these three as a standalone province, as caliphal governors instead typically presided over more than one province. Arabic sources of the tenth century consistently depict Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan together.

FORGETTING BYZANTIUM

It is hard to make sense of Byzantine administrative units in Arabic literature mainly because these appear as literary vestiges rather than viable administrative organizations. Byzantine nomenclature did not fit the circumstances of caliphal rule. Three Byzantine administrative schemas appear in Arabic literature: Greater and Lesser Armenia, Interior and Exterior Armenia, and the quadripartite division of Armenia.

Greater and Lesser Armenia

The term Greater Armenia originally designated the bulk of Armenia east of the Euphrates, including Lakes Van, Sevan, and Urmia and extending west not quite as far as Melitene, while Lesser Armenia denoted a small territory situated directly between Cappadocia and Greater Armenia, south of the Pontos.[3] Following the reforms of Maurice in 591, the Byzantine province of Greater Armenia became analogous to the Armenian Upper Armenia (Barjr Hayk‘), redefining the toponym as a small territory centered around Justinianopolis and Trebizond.[4]

[3] Adontz 1970, 472; Garsoïan 1989, 472; Laurent & Canard 1980, 39.

[4] Garsoïan 1989, 70: Եւ որ ի Մեծ Հայոց մասն ինչ մնացեալ էր ի ձեռս Հոռոմոց կողմանց անտի ի Բասենոյ մինչև ի սահմանս Ասորեստանի Մեծ Հայք զնա կոչէ։

Širakac'i's seventh-century definition of Greater Armenia (Mec Hayk') is far more expansive than the Byzantine territory. The long recension of his Armenian *Geography* defines Upper/Greater Armenia as Qālīqalā/Karin; Fourth Armenia; Ałjnik', Muks/Mokk'; Kōrčēk'; Persarmenia, "which is near Azerbaijan [Atrpatakan]"; Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan; Sīsajān/Siwnik'; Arjax; Balāsajān/P'aytakaran; Utik'; Gugark'; Ṭayr/Tayk'; and Ararat.[5] The short recension of this same work offers a similar description for Greater Armenia.[6] N. Garsoïan sees Širakac'i's Greater Armenia as the realization of an Armenian ideal fostered by the lack of Umayyad meddling, but adds that it does not reflect the actual administration of any particular period.[7] Širakac'i's *Geography* is anything but copious regarding Lesser Armenia (P'ok'r Hayk'). This toponym occurs twice in the long recension, first when Širakac'i conflates Cilicia and Cappadocia into a single geographical unit and again when he uses the term to refer to an area in Albania "east of Melitene."[8]

Geographers writing in Arabic inherited the Romano-Byzantine terms, but applied them to very different territories. Compare, for example, Širakac'i's Greater and Lesser Armenia to Yāqūt's Greater and Lesser Armenia:

> And it is said: There are two Armenias, the Greater [*kubrā*] and the Lesser [*ṣughrā*], and their borders are from Bardhʿa to Bāb al-Abwāb, and from the other direction to Byzantium [*bilād al-Rūm*, lit: the land of the Romans], the Caucasian mountains and the Lord of the Throne [*ṣāḥib al-Sarīr*, the Avars]. And it is said: Greater Armenia is Khilāṭ and its surrounding area and Lesser Armenia is Tiflīs and its surrounding area.[9]

The primary difference is, of course, that the Romans and Byzantines did not consider Armenia to extend as far east or north as it appears in Arabic. Significantly, this corresponds with Širakac'i's vague designation of Albania as another Lesser Armenia, provided we keep in mind that Arab and Iranian authors writing in Arabic identified not just Bāb

[5] Laurent & Canard 1980, 41–4; Širakac'i 1881, 29.

[6] Širakac'i 1944, 348.

[7] Garsoïan 2012b, 124–5: "This image of a single, imaginary Greater Armenia, resting on a territorial core but corresponding to no historic moment, embodied a new concept, that of a nation free from the framework of a state."

[8] Širakac'i 1881, 35: (speaking of Mt. Amanus): որ բաժանէ ըստ հիւսիսոյ զԿիլիկիա եւ զԿապադոկիա, այսինքն, զՓոքր Հայս՝ յԱսորոց; Širakac'i 1881, 30: (speaking of Armenia IV): Եւ երթալով զմտիւք՝ ելանէ ի սահմանս Փոքր Հայոց, յելից Մելտինէ.

[9] Yāqūt 1995, 160: وقيل: هما أرمينيتان الكبرى والصّغرى, وحدّهما من بردعة الى باب الابواب, ومن الجهة الأخرى إلى بلاد الروم وجبل القبق وصاحب السرير. وقيل: إرمينية الكبرى خلاط ونواحيها وإرمينية الصغرى تفليس ونواحيها.

al-Abwāb/Darband and Bardhʿa/Partaw, but also Tiflīs/Tpʻilisi, as Albanian territory. We will return to the connection between Armenia and Albania. Here it suffices to show that Greater and Lesser Armenia in Greek and Armenian sources bear no resemblance to the same toponyms in Arabic. One of the earliest geographers writing in Arabic, the Iranian scribe Ibn Khurradādhbih, uses the Persian toponym for Greater Armenia and refers to its *shāh*, or *buzurg Arminiyān shāh* (بزرك ارمنيان شاه); this suggests not only that he relied on a Persian source for this administrative model, but also that his source may have referred to the Arsacid period, when that title was reserved for the Parthian heir apparent.[10]

Interior and Exterior Armenia

Again, the appearance of the toponym *Interior Armenia* in Arabic cannot sustain an argument for continuity from Byzantine to caliphal administration. Although there was no Exterior Armenia in the Byzantine period, Interior Armenia designated the area to the immediate north of Lake Van, around the city of Manazkert.[11] It is in fact used synonymously with the reduced province of Greater Armenia (Armenian: Upper Armenia, Barjr Hayk') before the reforms of Justinian. This term gained new significance after the land gains and the reforms of Maurice in 591 and, for a very short span, referred to the area around Qālīqalā/Karin (Greek: Theodosiopolis) and Kars.[12] The term Interior Armenia is not found in Širakac'i's *Geography*,[13] but it does appear in Drasxanakertc'i's tenth-century *History of the Armenians*: Maurice renamed "the region of Tayk' with its borders, Armenia Profunda and the region of the city of Duin, Interior Armenia."[14]

[10] Lang 1983, 517; Ter-Łevondyan 1961, 62, Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 9. On the title in the Sasanian period, see Daryaee 2012, 190.

[11] Adontz 1970, 39–53; Hewsen 2001, 90 and 101.

[12] Adontz 1970, 39; Garsoïan 1989, 473. See also Hübschmann 1904, 226–7.

[13] Hakobyan 2007, 96: Širakac'i instead calls this area Barjr Hayk'.

[14] Hübschmann 1904, 232, n. 2, does not mention the Byzantine definition of Interior Armenia, relying only on Drasxanakertc'i: "Danach wäre Taikh lateinisch *Armenia profunda*, die Gegend von Dvin *Armenia interior* genannt worden. Anders Gelzer, nach welchem Taikh: *Armenia interior* [arm. *nerk'sagoyn*], Dvin aber *Armenia inferior* [arm. *storin*] geheißen hätte. Die Gegend von Dvin ist hier das Land westlich von Dvin, da Dvin selbst persisch geblieben war." He suggests the link to Abū l-Fidāʾ, but does not comment on the comparison. See Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 70, for the reforms of Maurice: իսկ զկողմանս Տայոց սահմանօք իւրովք հանդերձ՝ Խորազոյն Հայք, և զկողմն Դվինի քաղաքի՝ Ներքսազոյն Հայք.

The terms Interior and Exterior Armenia, Armīniyya l-dākhila and Armīniyya l-khārija, both appear in Arabic in Ibn Ḥawqal and Idrīsī's geographies and furthermore correspond to the differentiation of Armenia from "the land of the Armenians" (*bilād al-Arman*) as found in the later work by Abū l-Fidāʾ.[15] While there is some overlap between Byzantine Interior Armenia and Ibn Ḥawqal's, notably the inclusion of Qālīqalā/Karin, this refers to the division between Muslim emirates and Bagratuni territories and postdates the period of caliphal rule in Armenia. Its reappearance here may conceivably be related to Byzantine raids against Qālīqalā/Karin at the end of the ninth century or the city's recapture in 949. We will therefore merely conclude that the Arabic sources on Interior and Exterior Armenia do not relate to Byzantine antecedents *or* the circumstances of caliphal rule in the North.

The Quadripartite Division of Armenia

The quadripartite division of Armenia is the most confusing historically, since the toponyms shifted depending on the period in question and its political realities. The concept of a fourfold division of Armenia is clearly inherited from Roman and Byzantine administration, but the definition of each of the four Armenias did not remain fixed even then.[16] Justinian repositioned the Armenian provinces in 536, at a time when the area between Lake Van and Lake Sevan (Persarmenia), Albania, and Georgia fell under the jurisdiction of the Sasanian Empire.[17] Maurice introduced extensive changes with the acquisition of new territory from the Persians in 591. Furthermore, the Armenian appellation for each territory was not necessarily synonymous with the Byzantine norms.

[15] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 343: وهما ارمينيتان فإحداهما تعرف بالداخلة والأخرى بالخارجة وفى بعض الخارجة مدن للمسلمين وفى أيديهم لم يزل يليها المسلمون وقد قوطع عليها الأرمن فى غير وقت وهى لملوك الإسلام كارجيش ومنازجرد وخلاط وحدودها ظاهرة فحدّها من المشرق الى برذعة ومن المغرب الى الجزيرة ومن الجنوب الى اذربيجان ومن الشمال الى نواحى بلد الروم من جهة قاليقلا وكانت قاليقلا فى وسط بلد الروم ثغرًا عظيمًا لأهل اذربيجان والجبال والري وما والاها وهي مدينة الداخلة وقد تقدّم أنهما ارمينيتان فالداخلة دبيل ونشوى وقليقلا وما والى ذلك من الشمال والخارجة بركرى ومدينة وخلاط وارجيش ووسطان والزوزان وما بين ذلك من البقاع والقلاع والنواحى والاعمال; Idrīsī 1978, 824: دبيل أكبر قطرا من مدينة أردبيل وهي أجل بلدة بأرض أرمينية الداخلة وهي قصبتها وبها دار الإمارة دون بلاد جميع أرمينية. . .وأرمينية أرمينيتان إحداهما أرمينية الداخلة والثانية أرمينية الخارجة فالداخلة منها دبيل ونشوى وقالي قلا وأهر وورزقاق وما والاها والخارجة منها هي مثل بركري وخلاط وأرجيش ووسطان والزوزان وما بين ذلك من القلاع والنواحي والأعمال. See also passing mention in Idrīsī 1978, 830: وكذلك نهر الرس كبير جدا يخرج من نواحي أرمينية الداخلة من قالي قلا فيمر بأران ويحد ارمينية من جهة الغرب بلاد الارمن; Abū l-Fidāʾ 1840, 387: أرمينية. Laurent & Canard 1980, 60, n. 42, note that Ibn Ḥawqal's rendering does not align with the Armenian, but offers no explanation.

[16] Canard, Cahen, & Deny 2016, "Armīniya," EI².

[17] Hewsen 2001, 86.

Rather than delving into each of the four provinces here, we can look merely at a single one as a foil. First Armenia was enlarged under Justinian's reforms to include both the original province Armenia I (around Sebastia)[18] and also Inner Armenia. This placed the province immediately south of the Black Sea with its center at Tzoumina near modern-day Erzincan, including Trebizond and extending as far as Qālīqalā/Karin in the east and New Caesarea in the west. When Maurice restructured the themes in 591, Justinian's Armenia III was renamed Armenia I.[19] According to Drasxanakertc'i, post-Justinian Armenia I was based in Sebastia, while post-Maurice Armenia I was centered around Melitene.[20]

The longer recension of Širakac'i's geography mentions that Armenia I was once Armenia II, outlining the province as follows:

> The land of Armenia II, which is now called Armenia I, lies east of Cilicia close to the mountain Taurus, near the mountain Amanos, which separates it [Armenia II] from Komagen of Syria up until the Euphrates. It has other mountains, Igon and Basilikon[21] and Kʻormandon; rivers, the abovementioned Piṙamis and Paṙatis and Kawkawa and Kaṙomosos; and two passes entering into Syria.[22]

The Arabic definition of Armenia I (Arabic: Armīniyya l-ūlā) is clearly unrelated to both the Romano-Byzantine and Armenian provinces. The accounts that mention Armenia I in Arabic all read as follows: "Armenia I: Sīsajān, Albania, Tiflīs, Bardhʿa, Baylaqān, Qabala, and Sharwān."[23] This same process can be repeated for the other three provinces of Armenia in

[18] Hieroclis 1939, 37, for pre-Justinian Armenia I: Ἐπαρχία Ἀρμενίας ᾱ, ὑπὸ ἡγεμόνα πόλεις ε. Σεβάστια. Νικόπολις. Κολόνια. Σατάλα. Σεβαστούπολις. Honigmann identifies these cities as follows: "Gavras, à 3 km. à l'Est de Sivas. Pürk près d'Endires. Şebin-Karahisar. Sadak (Sadağ). Sulu Saray (Çiftlik)." Garsoïan 1989, 472, notes that the original Armenia I was created under Theodosius I with its capital at Sebaste, which was later moved to Satala. See also Garsoïan 2004c, 105; Grousset 1984, 239; Hakobyan 2007, 100–1.

[19] Garsoïan 1989, 473, 2004c, 109.

[20] Drasxanakertcʻi 1996, 70; Ghazarian 1904, 207; Grousset 1984, 252.

[21] Širakacʻi 1881, 1979, and 1992 all have Zigon, as if the q is part of the name of the mountain instead of the accusative marker. All of them (except Soukry) take Zigon Basilicon as being a single mountain. The short recension does not give the names of the mountains, but it does say that there are three mountains and four rivers (so Zigon and Basilicon have to be different mountains). Širakacʻi 1944, 347.

[22] Širakacʻi 1881, 24-5: Աշխարհ Երկրորդ Հայք, որ արդ կոչին Առաջին Հայք, յելից կալով Կիլիկիոյ առ Տաւրոս լերամբ յերի Ամանոս լերին, որ բաժանէ ընդ նա եւ ընդ կոմագենի Ասորւոց մինչեւ ցԵփրատ: Ունի եւ այլ լերինս. զԻգոն եւ զԲասիլիկոն եւ զ Կոռոմանդոն. Եւ գետ զնոյն զՊիռամիս եւ զՊառատիս եւ զԿաւկաւա եւ զԿառոմոսոս, եւ դրունս երկու ելանելոյ Ասորւոց:

[23] Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 122: ارمينية الاولى السيسجان وأرّان وتفليس وبرذعة والبيلقان وقبلة وشروان.; Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 286–7: ومن ارمينية الاولى البيلقان وقبلة... وارمينية الاولى هي السّيسجان وارّان وتفليس; وقيل أربعة فالأولى: بيلقان وقبلة وشروان وما انضمّ إليهاعدّ منها; cf: Abū l-Fidāʾ 1840, 387. Yāqūt 1995, I 160: وشروان

the quadripartite schema: the Arabic sources about the four Armenias do not reflect Byzantine or Armenian antecedents.

Mnemonic Additions

Greater and Lesser Armenia, Interior and Exterior Armenia, and the quadripartite division of Armenia are all inheritances from the region's Romano-Byzantine past, but they have no demonstrable connection to Byzantine administration beyond their names.[24] Although Arabic sources preserve the toponyms, there are a number of reasons to suggest that they do so on their own terms as part of a broader process of forgetting of pre-Islamic, non-Sasanian administrative geography. First, references to the Byzantine terms in Arabic literature are comparatively rare. The most popular of these paradigms is the quadripartite division of Armenia, and even that appears only in the work of a few early geographers and historians such as Balādhurī, Ibn Khurradādhbih, and Ibn al-Faqīh. That said, it is nearly impossible for such information to be effaced from Arabic literature given the close attention to faithful transmission of early texts; as such, the quadripartite division appears in the later works of Yāqūt and Abū l-Fidāʾ.

Instead, this forgetting took the form of repurposing or abstracting meaning from the toponyms. There are no Byzantine administrative titles that arrive unchanged in the period of caliphal rule. The toponyms, therefore, are merely a literary vestige of an imperial past and appear divorced of their earlier meaning. Hearing from multiple knowledgeable inhabitants of Armenia and Albania, Balādhurī "pieced one [account] to the other" to arrive at the following description:

> Shimshāṭ, Qālīqalā, Khilāṭ, Arjīsh, and Bājunays used to belong to Armenia IV; the district of Basfurrajān, Dabīl, Sirāj Ṭayr, and Baghrawand used to belong to Armenia III; Georgia (Jurzān) used to belong to Armenia II; Sīsajān and Arrān used to belong to Armenia I. And it is [also] said that only Shimshāṭ was Armenia IV; Qālīqalā, Khilāṭ, Arjīsh, and Bājunays used to belong to Armenia III; Sirāj Ṭayr, Baghrawand, Dabīl, and Basfurrajān used to belong to Armenia II; and Sīsajān, Albania (Arrān), and Tiflīs used to belong to Armenia I. Georgia and Albania used to belong to the Khazars and the rest of Armenia was in Byzantine control and governed by the lord (*ṣāḥib*) of Arminyāqus.[25]

[24] Ghazarian 1904, 208: "Keine von den angeführten Einteilungen stimmt mit der von den arabischen Historikern und Geographen angegebenen überein."

[25] Mušełyan 1979, 131–2, n. 12; Ter-Łevondyan 1961, 70–1. Balādhurī 1866, 193-4: حدّثني محمّد بن اسماعيل من ساكني برذعة وغيره عن ابي براء عنبسة ابن بحر الارمنى وحدّثني محمّد بن بشر القالي عن

With back-to-back and conflicting definitions of each of the provinces, Balādhurī is highlighting the historical changes under Byzantine rule, but it is hard to believe that he is describing the reality of caliphal rule in his own period.[26] The reference to the Khazars and the Byzantine theme at the end of this passage presumably refers to the seventh century after the collapse of Sasanian power and before the installation of caliphal governors. Ending the passage with the Khazars and Byzantium suggests instead that Balādhurī is recording the period before the Islamic incursions. Presumably if the Caliphate relied on the quadripartite model, Balādhurī's information would be more streamlined and we would find this information more commonly in Arabic texts. He is not reflecting on the caliphal administration of his own day, nor is he expounding on the conflicting legacy of the Byzantine tradition. Balādhurī presented two back-to-back, inconsistent descriptions of the quadripartite schema. He was, just like Širakac'i and Drasxanakertc'i, grappling with the successive changes to Byzantine administration in the North as they were remembered locally after the fact; his sources, we must remember, are local *shaykh*s. He rendered an ill-understood administrative paradigm with incomplete knowledge and/or muddied the perception of Byzantine power. Either way, this demonstrates the waning of Byzantine presence in the area and Arab indifference to or ignorance of *wie es eigentlich gewesen* in Byzantine Armenia.

S. Savant devotes half of *The New Muslims of Post-conquest Iran* (2013) to the process of forgetting in early Islamic history. Citing U. Eco, she discusses "mnemonic additions" to traditions in early Islamic historical writing, the build-up of details that serve to muddy the transmission of narratives "not by producing absence but by multiplying presences."[27]

اشياخه وبرمك بن عبد الله الدّبيلي ومحمّد بن المخيّس الخلاطي وغيرهم عن قوم من اهل العلم بامور ارمينية سقت حديثهم ورددت من بعضه على بعض قالوا: كانت شمشاط وقاليقلا وخلاط وأرجيش وباجنيس تدعى ارمينية الرابعة: وكانت كورة البسفرّجان ودبيل وسراج طير وبغروند تدعى ارمينية الثالثة وكانت جرزان تدعى ارمينية الثانية وكانت السيسجان وأرّان تدعى ارمينية الاولى ويقال كانت شمشاط وحدها ارمينية الرابعة وكانت قاليقلا وخلاط وأرجيش وباجنيس تدعى ارمينية الثالثة وسراج طير وبغروند ودبيل والبسفرّجان تدعى ارمينية الثانية وسيسجان وأران وتفليس تدعى ارمينية الاولى وكانت جرزان وأرّان في ايدي الخزر وسائر أرمينية في ايدي الروم يتولّاها صاحب أرمنياقس; Ghazarian 1904, 155, interprets one of Balādhurī's explanations as referring to the divisions in Armenia before the arrival of the Arabs.

[26] Cf. Ełiazaryan 2010 follows the quadripartite division. I have found few references in Arabic that use the quadripartite schema specifically in relation to the period of direct caliphal control, though some admittedly do. As an example, see Ibn Aʿtham 1975, VIII 234: وبقي الحسن بن قحطبة بارمينية، فأقبل حتى نزل إلى مدينة برذعة، ودعا بابن له يقال له قحطبة فولاه الباب والأبواب، ودعا بابنه إبراهيم فولاه بلاد جرزان من تفليس وما والاها، ودعا بابنه محمد فولاه إرمينية الرابعة من بلاد أخلاط وقاليقلا وما والاها

[27] Eco 1988, 254–61, qtd. Savant 2013b, 24 and 136; see also Savant 2013a, 186: "the past was written out of the shared memories of Muslims, but also written over, as new

Savant uses the analogy of a palimpsest, "traditionists writing over the record of past generations" and thereby obscuring the elements less useful for any particular generation. Here we find traction for our specific example. Even if the remnants of conflicting traditions preserve Greek administrative geography, they do this without the explication of the mutable nature of Byzantine administration. This remains, however, an enterprise in reading between the lines. "In the end, therefore, modern historians forming their own narratives must often read against the grain of their sources, or within it, to try to discern how earlier generations have assembled the past."[28] We cannot prove the purposeful forgetting of Byzantium based on divining Balādhurī's intentions. Instead, we must place the muddled accounts of Byzantine administrative structure in dialog with the disappearance of Byzantine titles (Chapter 4) and the evolution of Arabic traditions regarding Greek presence in the North (Chapter 3).

THE SYRIAC SUPER-ARMENIA AND THE IRAQI SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY

The most significant stumbling block here is not the disregard for Byzantine administration in Arabic sources, but rather the creation of another geographical paradigm that supported Armenian ecclesiastical claims over the neighboring Caucasian churches and thereby proposed an alternative to the Byzantine administrative schema based on local Christian concerns. According to this paradigm, which appears in J. Laurent's *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam* (1919), A. Ter-Łevondyan's studies, and the majority of modern works related to caliphal Armenia, the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids ruled over "Armīniyya," a super-Armenia composed of Armenia, Georgia, and Albania. This is a problematic construction that predates the arrival of Islam and is projected onto caliphal rule. The definition of this super-Armenia as a composite of multiple provinces finds little support in Arabic sources and cannot be accepted as the norm for caliphal administration without a few caveats.

memories filled the pages of works that otherwise could have preserved more detailed knowledge of the area's past."

[28] Savant 2013b, 235.

The Christian Context

The combination of Armenia, Georgia, and Albania as a single unit appears regularly in the literature of all three provinces. It is based on a regional and linguistic division and is consistent with Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian descriptions of the area from the earliest period of Christianization that persists throughout the period of caliphal rule without modification,[29] although we must acknowledge that none of the sources explicitly refers to Georgia and Albania as *part of* caliphal Armenia. For example, Sebēos notes that in his pact with Muʿāwiya, Tʿēodoros Ṙštuni spoke on behalf of "Armenia, Georgia, Albania, and Siwnikʿ, up to the Caucasus and the Čoray Pass [Ṣūl]."[30] The combination of Armenia, Albania, and Georgia is ubiquitous in Armenian sources. For example, Łewond groups the three provinces together in a description of the second *fitna* although again it is important to note that he does not call this grouping Armenia.[31]

Though there is comparatively little information available in Georgian sources, it is possible to glean references in them to Armenia, eastern Georgia, and Albania as a single administrative unit. While the *Book of Kʿartʿli* twice links Armenia, Kʿartʿli, and Heretʿi, it also reads: "Then Humen, son of Xalil [Muḥammad b. Khālid], came again as amir; he governed all the territory even more willfully: Armenia, Kʿartʿli, and Ran."[32] This same unit is also found in *The History of King Vaxtʿang Gorgasali*.[33] It is unlikely that Kʿartʿli here stands for the entirety of Georgia,[34] so this at least clarifies the historical reality that western Georgia never came under the rule of the Caliphate. It also does not refer to Kʿartʿli and Ran as *part of* Armenia, merely claiming that they were ruled together.

The most explicit textual evidence to support the geographical unit identifying Georgia and Albania as *part of* Armenia, and also excluding

[29] Ter-Łevondyan 1976b, 11.

[30] Ter-Łevondyan 1958, 75 qtd. Sebēos: զՀայս և զՎիրս և զԱղուանս և զՍիւնիս մինչև ցԿապկոհ և ցՊահակն Ճորայ

[31] Łewond, ed. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 13r: Եւ ի ժամանակի պատերազմին որ ի մէջ տաճկաց. դադարեցին ի հարկատութենէ նոցա հայք. վիրք. աղուանք. Łewond 1857,

[32] *Book of Kʿartʿli* 1996, 262. This is the only specific reference to an administrative grouping of the three. For the Armenia, Kʿartʿli, and Heretʿi combination, see 258, 259.

[33] *The History of King Vaxtʿang Gorgasali* 1996, 245: "Now at that time the lands of Kʿartʿli, Armenia and Ran had been devastated, and there were no dwellings nor food at all for men or beasts." These references are not replicated in the Armenian version.

[34] Rapp 2014, 213, n. 139.

Azerbaijan, comes from a pre-Islamic source, namely the sixth-century Syriac chronicle of Ps. Zacharias Rhetor:

> And besides these there are also in this northern region [NB: ܫܬ ܫܒܚ ܫܒܚ] five believing peoples, and their bishops are twenty-four, and their Catholic[os] lives in D'win, the chief city of Persian Armenia. The name of their Catholic[os] was Gregory, a righteous and distinguished man. Further Gurzan, a country in Armenia, and its language is like Greek; and they have a Christian prince, who is subject to the king of Persia. Further the country of Arran in the country of Armenia, with a language of its own, a believing and baptized people; and it has a prince subject to the king of Persia. Further the country of Sisagan, with a language of its own, a believing people, and there are also heathens living in it. The country of Bazgun [Abkhāz/Ap'xazet'i], with a language of its own, which adjoins and extends to the Caspian Gates and sea, the Gates in the land of the Huns.[35]

As we see in this passage, the attribution of Albania and Georgia (Gurzan, which is the Syriac rendering of K'art'li)[36] as provinces within Armenia relates to an idealized supranational Christian solidarity under Armenian leadership. Following the council at Dabīl/Duin in 601, this unity was paramount to the Armenian claim of ecclesiastical primacy: not only are the three united as one, but Georgia and Albania have a subordinate role within the greater power of Armenia. This is a statement of contested religious solidarity, and not of administrative reality, as these were "people who were all believers and baptized into the one catholic and apostolic church."[37]

One way to problematize super-Armenia, or to reveal its agenda in terms of ecclesiastical authority, is to turn to Dasxuranc'i's *History of Albania*. Even though this was written in Armenian and, accordingly, may represent an Armenicized rendition of Albanian history, it still demonstrates a discomfort with the super-Armenia paradigm. Dasxuranc'i writes about the three provinces both as independent kingdoms and as controlled by a single authority, depending on the relevant historical

[35] Ps. Zacharias Rhetor 1899, 327–8, 1924, II 214; see also Adontz 1970, 171.

[36] Note that Abkhāz/Ap'xazet'i and Sīsajān/Siwnik' are included in the "northern region," but they are not explicitly defined as countries in Armenia, as we see for K'art'li and Albania.

[37] Ełišē 1982, 65,1989, 20: որք էին ամենեքեան հաւատացեալք և մկրտեալք ի մի կաթողիկէ և առաքելական եկեղեցի; see also Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 64: Եւ այսպէս յայսմ ժամանակի մի հաւատ բարեպաշտութեան առհասարակ հաստատեալ լինէր յաշխարհին Հոռոմոց, Հայոց, Վրաց և Աղուանից հաւասար ամենեցունց …ի բաց ընկեցեալ զժողովն Քաղկեդոնի.

circumstances.[38] Dasxuranc‘i does claim that *Albanian* leaders ruled over the combined territory of Georgia, Albania, and Armenia, but he certainly does not call this Armenia and, further, Dowsett dismisses this as “a gross exaggeration.”[39]

The Georgians, Dasxuranc‘i writes, veered toward Chalcedonianism, while the Armenians perverted history to proclaim for themselves the mother see of the Caucasian lands. He denies the Armenian claims to an apostolic church and instead contends that Albania converted 270 years before Armenia, when a disciple of Jesus known as Ełišay founded the Church of Albania. Dasxuranc‘i then adds that “the Albanians turned from the Armenians in order to be subject to no one’s authority (*išxanut‘iwn*)”[40] because “the Greek generals at first encouraged them [the Armenians] to seek precedence over the Albanians.”[41] In other words, Albanian and Georgian subordination to Armenia has implications for contested ecclesiastical claims. Regarding Dasxuranc‘i’s remarks that Christianity reached Armenia via Albania instead of vice versa, Dowsett responds that “we have for the moment left the realm of history.”[42] Instead, we have entered the realm of memory, as this passage should be seen in light of the spread of Chalcedonian doctrine in tenth-century Albania, where Dasxuranc‘i compiled his history. For our purposes, though, it demonstrates that the subordination of Georgia and Albania under the authority of Armenia is a contested and polemical device laden with assumptions about the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

If Armenian, Albanian, and Georgian sources all broadly agree that caliphal administrators ruled the three provinces as one (the Umayyad North), not a single one of these sources substantiates that Georgia and

[38] Dasxuranc‘i 1961, 217: “for he [Sahl-i Smbatean] received sovereignty over Armenia, Georgia, and Albania, to rule authoritatively and regally over all”; compared to 106: “The Khazars advanced through the passes of the three kingdoms of Armenia, Georgia, and Albania.”

[39] Dowsett 1957, 463. Others have explained this by identifying Sahl-i Smbatean as an Armenian, based on a passage in Masʿūdī; see Anassian 1969, 317–18. We will return to this assertion in the conclusion.

[40] On *išxanut‘iwn*, see P‘awstos Buzandac‘i 1989, 534.

[41] Dasxuranc‘i 1961, 176–7, 1983, 274–5: Իսկ յունական զորավարացն գրգռեալ զնա խնդրել զգահերիցութիւնն ի վերայ Աղուանից. որում ոչ հաւանեալ Աղուանից զայլ ումն երևեցուցին, կանխաւ առաքեալ եկեալ յաշխարհն Աղուանից, Եղիշայ անուն յա շակերտացս տեառն, ձեռնադրեալ ի սրբոյն Յակոբայ եղբօր տեառն, քարոզեալ անդ և եկեղեցիս շինեալ նախկին քան ի Հայս: Առաջինն մայր եկեղեցեացն արևելեայց Գիսոյ եկեղեցին նորին հիմնադրեալ և զինքեանս նմա աւանդեալ. դարձան ի Հայոց առ ինքեանս չլինել ընդ ումեք իշխանութեամբ:

[42] Dasxuranc‘i 1961, 173, n. 2.

Albania are *part of* Armenia. This comes instead from a pre-Islamic Greek source preserved today in Syriac. If super-Armenia is an uncommon paradigm in the sources of the North, then we should expect to find resounding evidence for it in Arabic sources in order to accept it as the primary caliphal administrative organization.

Support for Super-Armenia in Arabic Sources

Few passages in Arabic offer explicit support for this version of super-Armenia, and all appear in the works produced as part of the Iraqi school of geography. Yaʿqūbī, a secretary for the Ṭāhirids in the East and the grandson of an ʿAbbāsid governor of the North, explains in a section labeled *aqsām Īrānshahr* that: "The districts of Armenia are Albania, Georgia, Nashawā [Naxčawan], Khilāṭ [Xlatʿ], Dabīl [Duin], Sirāj [Širak], Ṣughdabīl [Sagodebeli], Bājunays [Apahunikʿ], Arjīsh [Arčēš], Sīsajān [Siwnikʿ], and the city [of] Bāb al-Abwāb [Darband]."[43] Bakrī and Abū l-Fidāʾ later replicate this passage, the latter citing Yaʿqūbī explicitly, but adding the division of the territory into three: "Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb [= Yaʿqūbī] said that Armenia is divided into three parts. The first part includes Qālīqalā, Khilāṭ, Shimshāṭ and whatever is between them; the second part, Jurzān [NB: Khazrān, "Khazars," is corrected to read Jurzān here], Tiflīs, and the city of Bāb al-Lān and everything in between them; the third part includes Bardhʿa, which is a city of Albania, Baylaqān, and Bāb al-Abwāb."[44]

Ibn Khurradādhbih, a ninth-century Iranian administrator who worked in Jibāl/Media, lists the provinces as follows: "Armenia I is Sīsajān, Albania (Arrān), Tiflīs, Bardhʿa, Baylaqān, Qabala, and Sharwān. Armenia II is Georgia [Jurzān, the manuscripts read حرزان and حوران], Ṣughdabīl, Bāb Fayrūz Qubādh, and [Bāb] al-Lakz. Armenia III is Basfurrajān, Dabīl, Sirāj Ṭayr, Baghrawand, and Nashawā. Armenia IV is Shimshāṭ, Khilāṭ, Qālīqalā, Arjīsh, and Bājunays."[45] This passage is curious in that Ibn

[43] Yaʿqūbī 1897, 106: كور ارمينية أرّان وجُرْزان ونَشوَى وخِلاط ودُبيل وسِرَاج وصُغْدبيل وباجُنَيْس وأرْجِيش وسِيسَجَان ومدينة الباب والابواب.

[44] Abū l-Fidāʾ 1840, 387: قال احمد بن ابي يعقوب وارمينية على ثلثة اقسام القسم الاول يشتمل على قاليقلا وخلاط وشمشاط وما بين ذلك والقسم الثانى على خزران (جرزان) وتفليس ومدينة باب اللان وما بين ذلك والقسم الثالث يشتمل على بردعة وهي مدينة الران وعلى البيلقان وباب الابواب.; Bakrī 1992, I 497: وكور أرمينية أرّان وجرزان ونشوى وخلاط ودبيل وسراج وجردبيل وياخس وأرجيش وسيسجان ومدينة الباب والأبواب وهو درجان..

[45] Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 122: ارمينية الاولى السيسجان وأرّان وتفليس وبرذعة والبيلقان وقبلة وشروان. ارمينية الثانية جرزان وصغدبيل وباب فيروز قباذ واللكز. ارمينية الثالثة البسفرّجان ودبيل وسراج طير وبغروند ونشوى. ارمينية الرابعة شمشاط وخلاط وقاليقلا وأرجيش وباجنيس.

Khurradādhbih separates Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi from Georgia, when Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi is in fact the only place consistently associated with Georgia in Arabic literature. Ibn Khurradādhbih is here reconciling the usual placement of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi as a city in Albania and his rendition of the quadripartite division of Armenia, which requires the separation of eastern Georgia from Albania. Ibn Khurradādhbih follows this on the next page with the claim that "Khuwī, the Ṣanāriyya, Albāq [Ałbak], Kisāl, Abkhāz, the fortress of Jardmān, Khayzān, Shakkī, and the city of Bāb are also part of Armenia."[46] This later assertion places cities (Jardmān/Gardman, Shakkī/Šak'ē), regions (Abkhāz/Ap'xazet'i), and peoples (Ṣanāriyya/Canark') traditionally located in Albania or Georgia into Armenian territory. The main drawbacks, though, are that Ibn Khurradādhbih relies on the Byzantine quadripartite paradigm and fills the space between these two passages with a description of the activities of Sasanian emperors in the North, raising the question of whether his account accurately reflects caliphal administration.

Like Ibn Khurradādhbih, Qudāma b. Ja'far held a high position in the ʿAbbāsid *dīwān*, but in Baghdad instead of the provinces. A Christian convert, historian, and geographer writing in the end of the ninth century or beginning of the tenth, he similarly clarifies that "beyond that [Ṭarūn/Tarōn], on the northern side is the land of Armenia and its districts are Georgia, Dabīl, Baghrawand, Sirāj Ṭayr, Bājunays, Arjīsh, Khilāṭ, Sīsajān, Albania, the region of Qālīqalā, and Basfurrajān and its [Basfurrajān's] capital is Nashawā."[47] While his separation of Ṭarūn/Tarōn from Armenia is curious, likely indicating the separation of Bagratuni lands from his Armenia, Qudāma does place both Georgia and Albania as part of Armenia.

The texts of the Iraqi school are thus unusual, although not unique, in naming Georgia as part of Armenia. There are two details that inform our understanding of these passages. First, two of these geographers lived in the North (one in Armenia and the other in Jibāl) and, presumably, were familiar with traditions circulating locally. Perhaps their knowledge of super-Armenia reflects their familiarity with local traditions. Perhaps more importantly, all three of these geographers were administrators or scribes. While the Iraqi school of Arabic geography embraces details useful

[46] Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 123: ومن ارمينية ايضا خوى والصنارية وألباق وكسال وأبخاز وقلعة الجردمان وخيزان وشكّى ومدينة الباب.

[47] Qudāma 1889, 246: ومن وراء ذلك من جهة الشمال بلاد أرمينية وكورها جرزان ودبيل وبغروند وسراج طير باجنيس وأرجيش خلاط السيسجان أران كورة قاليقلا البسفرجان وقصبتها نشوى.

for provincial administration, such as tax lists: "the Islamic empire was by now very large and complicated, and its administrators needed information if they were to carry out the business of government efficiently."[48] The purposes of these geographies may therefore be more practical than partisan, which bodes well for a realistic description of ʿAbbāsid-era administrative geography. In other words, perhaps the descriptions of super-Armenia in Arabic accurately describe ʿAbbāsid administration, but the geographers of the tenth century replaced this schema with material that better fit the concerns of contemporary authors.

Finding Georgia

We might expect that more sources produced later would perpetuate the super-Armenia paradigm, but they do not. One difficulty facing the super-Armenia paradigm is not necessarily territorial organization, but rather reading Georgia (Jurzān) into Arabic sources. Despite a robust geographical tradition in the ninth and tenth centuries, not a single work in Arabic or Persian from this period defines the term Jurzān. The only toponym consistently assigned to Georgia is Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, although Bāb al-Lān occasionally appears as well. Presumably Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi represents the province of K'art'li.

Eastern Georgia, namely K'art'li and Heret'i, were caliphal territory. Khākhit/Kaxet'i is a bit harder to situate. On the one hand, Toumanoff identifies Khākhit/Kaxet'i as a place of refuge for K'art'velians fleeing caliphal rule,[49] suggesting that it was not part of the Caliphate. On the other hand, several modern scholars have identified the frequent references to the Ṣanāriyya/Canark' in Arabic as the inhabitants of Khākhit/Kaxet'i.[50] If this is the case, then Khākhit/Kaxet'i eclipsed Khazaria as the main foe of the ʿAbbāsids in the North. The Ṣanāriyya/Canark' flickered back and forth between rebelling against and acknowledging ʿAbbāsid

[48] Hopkins 1990, 308. Note that Hopkins here also offers another rationale for these geographies, which is not related to governance, but to *adab*: "One who aspired to be a possessor of *adab* – an *adīb* – considered that he ought to know something about everything and that there was no topic that did not merit serious investigation." He also points of the preservation of information about Iran in the works of these geographers, which indicates that the memory of pre-Islamic definitions of Iran cannot explain the distinction between the Iraqi and Balkhī schools in the matter of the administrative paradigms for the North. Iranian geographers contribute to both schools, preserving traditions in different ways.

[49] Toumanoff 1963, 24–5.

[50] Rapp 2003, 398; Toumanoff 1952, 220, n. 9.

suzerainty, constituting the most sustained challenge to the ʿAbbāsid governors stationed in Bardhʿa/Partaw. For example, the Ṣanāriyya/Canarkʿ humiliated Bughā l-Kabīr, defeating him multiple times in short succession and halting the expansion of Bughā's Caucasian campaigns. Masʿūdī identifies the Ṣanāriyya/Canarkʿ as ʿUqaylī Christians, but Minorsky rejects their claims to Arab parentage, suggesting that they might in fact have been Chechens.[51] Even if we dismiss the idea that historians writing in Arabic were in fact referring to Kaxetʿians as Ṣanāriyya/Canarkʿ, Minorsky further identifies the Arabic references to Shakkī/Šakʿē, which the Balkhī geographers place in Albania, as Khākhit/Kaxetʿi.[52] Either way, the frequent military forays against the Ṣanāriyya/Canarkʿ demonstrate that Khākhit/Kaxetʿi was indeed considered caliphal territory, if one of the more volatile border regions with only intermittent control.

The provinces of western Georgia, such as Apʿxazetʿi, Egrisi, Imeretʿi, Javaxetʿi, and Tao-Klarjetʿi, were not caliphal territory, although there were times when Georgian princes in the west paid tribute (Georgian: *xarki*, analogous to the Armenian *hark* and Arabic *kharāj*) to the Caliphate.[53] Tao (Taykʿ/Ṭayr), a border zone between Georgia and Armenia with a traditionally mixed population, appears in Arabic as part of Armenia, but it rarely (if ever) is separated from Sirāj/Širak and only appears in reference to outdated administrative schemas. Indeed, in Arabic, Sirājṭayr is typically combined into a single toponym, although Sirāj/Širak does appear separately, albeit rarely.[54] Like Khākhit/Kaxetʿi, Tao-Klarjetʿi was an area where Kʿartʿvelians relocated in order to distance themselves from caliphal power, such that the province attains the modern designation as a "neo-Kʿartʿli" in Rapp's analyses of Georgian historiographical works.

As Minorsky points out, "with the exception of the early Balādhurī, p. 202, (the conquest of 'Armenia'), the Arab authors know nothing of Western Georgia."[55] The New Persian toponym Gurz (گرز), presumably via the Middle Persian whence the Syriac Gurzān and the Arabic Jurzān, appears in the *Borders of the World* as part of Byzantium, not the Caliphate: "Gurz (Georgia?) is also a province of Rūm … all the

[51] Laurent & Canard 1980, 47; Minorsky 1958, 162.

[52] Minorsky 1953b, 28.

[53] Sumbat Davitʿis-Dze 2003, 357: "everyone in the Shavshetʿi, Klarjetʿi, and Nigali valleys paid tribute to the Saracens."

[54] See Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 123.

[55] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 422. He continues that eastern Georgia appears as part of Armenia, but we should note that he considers Armenia and Albania as a single province; see also 142–5.

customs (*akhlāq*) of these people resemble exactly and in every respect (*rāst ba-hama rūy*) those of the people of Rūm (Rūmiyān)."[56] If Jurzān is the Arabic rendition of the Persian Gurz, this refers only to western Georgia. Since many of the geographical works in Arabic do not refer to territory outside of the Caliphate, the lack of information about Jurzān makes sense.

We have already seen some of the difficulties facing Caucasiologists and K'art'velologists in using the term Georgia this early, as noted in the preliminary note on conventions, but the use of Georgia poses additional significant problems for Islamicists. Word-searchable databases of Arabic literature provide a quick glance at the use of any particular word in ʿAbbāsid-era texts. The toponym Jurzān appears most frequently in later historical and geographical works, especially those by Ibn ʿAsākir, Yāqūt, Ibn al-Athīr, Dhahabī, and Ibn Kathīr. The word Jurzān is certainly not missing in earlier works, but it most frequently appears in Arabic texts written in and before the tenth century in reference to the province before the Marwānid Reforms, that is before the advent of caliphal power in the North: the Arab conquests (Ibn Aʿtham, Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, Balādhurī, Ṭabarī, Bakrī), the quadripartite division of Armenia (Ibn Aʿtham, Balādhurī, Yaʿqūbī, Ibn Khurradādhbih), and the involvement of Sasanian emperors in the North (Balādhurī, Ibn Khurradādhbih).[57] It is not that a separate Jurzān did not exist or that it never appears, but that Arabic geographical and historical texts do not refer to it in the period of direct caliphal control as frequently as in later periods.

To complicate this matter even further, many modern editors supply the name جرزان (Jurzān, Georgia) where manuscripts read خزران (Khazrān, the Khazars). Arabic manuscripts are frequently only partially pointed; an editor may justifiably render an un-pointed or sloppy حرران as either Jurzān or Khazrān. Note Minorsky's reading of Munajjim-Bāshī's *History of Bāb al-Abwāb*, where he meticulously records every time he changes

[56] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 157; *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1962, 185: گرز ناحیتیست هم از روم بیشتر ازوی اندر جزیرها اند خرد، واندر دریای گرزایشان را شهریست کی گرز خوانند واندر رومست بر کران این دریا، همهء اخلاق این مردمان با رومیان ما ند راست بهمه روی. Minorsky's question mark in identifying Gurz as Georgia probably relates to the reference that the population lived on islands (or by the sea). This same chapter refers to Thrace as near "the Georgian Sea." *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1962, 174: دریای گرز must be the Black Sea instead of the Marmara Sea. The subsequent enumeration of Byzantine provinces is supposedly only to the *east* of Constantinople: Gurz appears in the list after Armeniakos and Chaldia, so the author is describing Byzantine territory by moving eastward along the Black (here: "Georgian") Sea.

[57] There are few exceptions to this, for example Ibn Aʿtham 1975, VIII 233, where الضيارية [read: الصنارية for Σαναραῖοι] appear in Jurzān: هم صنف من أصناف الكفار بأرض يقال لها ارض جرزان.

Khazrān to Jurzān. Sometimes Minorsky justifies this with reference to Armenian sources, but he also points out that de Goeje reads Jurzān into Arabic geographical treatises where the rationale is unclear. So, for example, de Goeje's version of Ibn Ḥawqal mentions صاحب جرزان وسغيان بن موسى, while the subsequent edition revised by Kramer has been corrected to read صاحب جرز وسقان بن موسى; Minorsky instead suggests that this should read *khazar* and refer to the city of Qabala. He is supposing that the name in Arabic here is Vashaqān b. Mūsā, to render the Albanian name Vač'akan.[58] Other scholars, including most notably J. Markwart, have also provided alternate readings for Jurzān.[59] This demonstrates that a definitive study of the toponym Jurzān, especially as it relates to the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods, will not be possible without a reevaluation of the manuscripts. The modern databases pass on the nineteenth-century readings of Arabic manuscripts, and the appearance of Jurzān in many cases may reveal the assumptions of modern editors.

Even if, for the sake of argument, we accept all references to Jurzān as correctly transcribed from the manuscripts, there is still little evidence of the toponym for the period of direct caliphal control. It appears rarely, such as Yaʿqūbī's reference to the rebellion of "Jurjān" (Georgia also appears corrected as Jurjān, the name of another province located near the Caspian) during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd.[60] References to Georgia in tenth-century Arabic sources exist, and in one it even appears as part of Armenia,[61] but this refers to the dominance of the Bagratuni/Bagrationi family and therefore postdates the period of caliphal rule in the North. Georgia reappears on a much larger scale later, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a testimony to the significance of the kingdom of Georgia.

Defining Albania

It is much easier to write a history of caliphal Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi[62] than caliphal Georgia, mainly because the province was divided, with only K'art'li, Heret'i, and Khākhit/Kaxet'i folded into the Caliphate, but also because

[58] Minorsky 1953a, 523–4, 1958, 35, n. 2.

[59] Markwart 1930, 460: "Für das verdorbene خزران ist also nicht جرزان Iberien, sondern الزوزاك Andzavac'ik' zu lesen."

[60] Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 519.

[61] See Munajjim-Bāshī 1953, *5: وكان للكورة جرزان وغيرها من ارمينية ملك يقال له اشوط بن العباس وكان ملقبا بشاهنشاه.; see also Yāqūt 1995, II 125: جرزان اسم جامع لناحية بأرمينية قصبتها تفليس حكى ابن الكلبي عن السرقي بن قطاميّ جرزان وأرّان وهما مما يلي أبواب أرمينية وأرّان هي أرض برذعة مما يلي الديلم

[62] Asatrian & Margarian 2004.

the murky toponym Jurzān appears only intermittently in Arabic sources in the period of direct caliphal control.

While eastern Georgia falls to the Islamic incursions, Arab and Iranian geographers place Georgian cities in Albania. Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, for example, appears as part of Albania in several Arabic geographies. Iṣṭakhrī defines the province of Albania as follows: "The border (*ḥadd*) of Albania is from Bāb al-Abwāb to Tiflīs up to the vicinity of the river Araxes, a place known as Ḥajīrān."[63] He also explains that "there are not larger cities in Albania than Bardh'a, Bāb, and Tiflīs."[64] Ibn Ḥawqal's description seems comparable, as he lists the largest towns as Bardh'a/Partaw, Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, and also mentions other smaller towns, such as Baylaqān, Warthān, Shamakha, Shabarān, Bardīj, Qabala, Shamkūr, and Janza. Muqaddasī explains that "as for Albania, it is about one-third of the region [the North] … its capital is Bardh'a and among its towns are Tiflīs, Qal'a, Khunān, Shamkūr, Janza, Bardīj, Shamākhiyya, Sharwān, Bākūh, Shābarān, Bāb al-Abwāb, Abkhān, Qabala, Shakkī, Malāzkird, and Tablā."[65]

Like the definitions of Armenia, Albania appears in various forms across time and historical traditions. As N. Garsoïan and B. Martin-Hisard aptly point out, "Ptolemy's Albania in no way corresponds to Armenian Ałuank', to the Georgian sources' Rani, or to the Arabs' Arrān."[66] Qal'a/Kala, Khunān/Xunan, Bardīj/Borchalo (Azeri: Borçalı), and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi are either Georgian cities or located on the Georgian–Albanian border, yet all appear as Albania in the Balkhī geographies. This sort of confusion prompts modern authors to gloss these texts as "merely a misunderstanding"[67] or to generalize that "the Arabs confounded Armenia and Georgia."[68] At a certain point we need to reassess the assumption that the Arab and Iranian geographers writing in Arabic were confused and accept that they did not necessarily define Georgia and Albania in line with modern expectations. Instead, the Arabic descriptions are based on Sasanian antecedents.

[63] Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 190: وحدّ الرّان من باب الابواب الى تفليس الى قرب نهر الرسّ مكان يعرف بحجيران. The footnote suggests, following Abū l-Fidā', that حجيران is a corrupted form of نخجوان.

[64] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 342; Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 187: وليس بالران مدينة اكبر من برذعة والباب وتفليس.

[65] Muqaddasī 1906, 374: فاما الران فانها تكون نحو الثلث من الاقليم فى مثل جزيرة بين البحيرة ونهر الرّسّ ونهر الملك يشقُّها طولًا قصبتها برذعة ومن مدنها تفليس القلعة خنان شمكور جنزة برديج الشماخية شروان باكوه الشابران باب الابواب الأبخان قيلة شكّى ملازكرد تبلا

[66] Garsoïan & Martin-Hisard 2012, 70.

[67] Ter-Łevondyan 1961, 68.

[68] Minorsky & Bosworth, "Al-Kurdj." EI².

According to Georgian sources,[69] the Sasanians frequently collapsed Albania and eastern Georgia as a single entity. Under the Georgian Xosroiani kings, this included establishing martial ties between the royals in K'art'li and the officials in Bardhʿa/Partaw, making the latter responsible for the Sasanian relationship with the Georgian élite. According to the *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali*, "the *erist'avi* of the Persian king, who governed Ran and Movakan up to the reign of Arč'il [r. 411–35] and *under whose administration K'art'li also fell* [emphasis added], gathered an army from Ran, Movakan, and Adarbadagan, and attacked Arč'il."[70] Arč'il's son married the daughter of the Sasanian administrator in Bardhʿa/Partaw, Queen Sagduxt, who converted to Christianity and so rushed to her father's city (Georgian: Bardav) to beg him to renounce retaliation against K'art'li.[71] This relationship continues past the fifth century: "The Mihrānid prince and future Christian martyr Pīrāgušnasp, for example, was reportedly appointed *marzbān* of K'art'li and Albania by Kavād in the sixth century."[72]

The connection between eastern Georgia and Albania is just as pronounced after the Sasanian abolition of the Xosroiani monarchy in 580. After the death of the last king, Bakur III, the *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* continues:

> Then the king of the Persians Urmizd [Hormozd, r. 579–90] gave Ran and Movakan to his son, who was called K'asre Ambarvez [Ḵosrow Parvīz, r. 590, 591–628]. He came and resided at Bardav, and began to confer with the *erist'avi*s of K'art'li. He promised great benefits, and set in writing their ancestral rights as *erist'avi*s from son to son. In this way, by flattery he seduced them; so the *erist'avi*s rebelled, and each separately paid tribute to K'asre Ambarvez.[73]

While this passage explains the disintegration of Xosroiani kingship, it also attests a tie between Sasanian rule in Bardhʿa/Partaw and the élite of K'art'li.

The "confusion" between Georgia and Albania in Arabic texts is not, then, misinformation, but rather the continuation of a Sasanian

[69] Armenian sources, to my knowledge, do not collapse Georgia and Albania, but we might still find echoes of this administrative paradigm. See, for example, T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 238, which identifies Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi as a city in the East. Armenian sources do frequently refer to Albania as "the East."

[70] *The History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* 1996, 154.

[71] *The History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* 1996, 159.

[72] Rapp 2014, 183.

[73] *The History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* 1996, 228–9; see also Rapp 2014, 341; Toumanoff 1952, 40.

perspective. As S. Rapp explains, "[b]ecause of the strategic connection of Partaw and Tp'ilisi, and because of their commanding positions in the transitional zone between highlands and lowlands, eastern Georgia and Albania were often linked by the Sasanian government."[74] The administration of eastern Georgia and Albania as a single unit is also attested explicitly in Georgian literature about the period of caliphal rule in the North. Sumbat Davit'is-dze attests this in his discussion of Ašot, the ʿAbbasid-era Bagrationi prince of K'art'li who died in 830: "Ashot *kuropalates* ruled this land as *mt'avari* and his residences were at Bardavi and Tp'ilisi, and he possessed the outlying lands[s]."[75]

If we reconsider the idea of a super-Armenia without forcing Georgia into the schema, assuming that by "Albania" the Arabic geographies intend Albania *and* eastern Georgia, we can pull in more historical texts as support. Some Arabic sources discuss Albania as part of Armenia, as does Ibn al-Faqīh: "Albania is the foremost kingdom in Armenia."[76] It is worth noting, though, that he cites Yaʿqūbī explicitly for this information and that he also claims that Albania and Sīsajān/Siwnik' (and not Georgia) are Khazar territory, indicating that he probably refers here to the pre-Marwānid period, possibly even the conquest era given mentions of the Khazars in the *futūḥ* narratives about the North.[77] Sebēos, writing at the dawn of the Sufyānid period (his history cuts off at the first *fitna*), supports this with claims that Albania and Sīsajān/Siwnik' were "formerly joined with Azerbaijan [Atrpatakan] in geography, until the kingdom of the Persians fell and the Ishmaelites ruled. Then they were conquered and combined with Armenia."[78] Whether this accurately represents Marwānid (let alone ʿAbbāsid) administration is unsure.

Yet the super-Armenia paradigm is rare in Arabic sources specifically because it leaves Azerbaijan out of the equation. If we situate our study on evidence from Arabic texts, it makes much more sense to discuss the North as an amalgam of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan, rather than the super-Armenia combination of Armenia, Albania, and Georgia. All sources in Arabic recognize that the caliphal representatives ruled the

[74] Rapp 2014, 183. See also 319: "whenever the Sasanians lacked a direct presence in K'art'li, the chief point of contact was Albania."

[75] Sumbat Davit'is-dze 2003, 355.

[76] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 291: ارمينية مملكة اول ارّان

[77] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 287; Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 122.

[78] Sebēos 1979, 175 (referring to Albania and Sīsajān/Siwnik'): որք լծեալ էին յառաջագոյն յաշխարհագիրն Ատրպատականի, մինչև բարձաւ թագաւորութիւնն Պարսից և տիրեաց Իսմայելացին, նոքա անդրէն նուաճեալ միաբանեցան ընդ Հայոց

North as a single province, but most include Azerbaijan, omit Georgia, and do not provide the name Armenia for the entire North.

SASANIAN GEOGRAPHY IN CONTEMPORARY AND LATER SOURCES

When we move away from the Byzantine paradigms and super-Armenia, it becomes clear that Arabic sources, and particularly those composed in the tenth century, are far more concerned with Sasanian administrative geography and its legacy.[79]

Sasanian Geography: K'usti Kapkoh and Kust-i Ādūrbādagān

Armenian and Middle Persian sources describe the Sasanian administrative model as a quadripartite division of *kūst*s, including the *kūst* of Ādūrbādagān or *kūst-i apaxtaran*, "the northern direction."[80] The only surviving Middle Persian geographical work, *The Provincial Capitals of Iran*, clearly saw heavy redactions in the ʿAbbāsid period, as it reads: "In the direction of Ādūrbādagān [kust ādūrbādagān], the city of Ganzag was built by Frāsyiak, the son of Tūr. The city of Āmol was built by the heretic who is full of death. Zoroaster, the son of Spitāmān was from that city. The city of Baghdad was built by Abū Jaʿfar [=Manṣūr, r. 754–75] whom they call Abū Dawānīq."[81] In this text, the definition of Kūst-i Ādūrbādagān is hardly prolific, but a comparable province also appears in Širakac'i's Armenian geography, notably dated to the seventh century:

> The land of the Persians is divided into four in this manner: *K'usti Xorasan* [read: *Xoraban*],[82] which is a region to the west … *K'usti Nmṙoǰ*, which is the region of the meridian, which is the south … *K'usti Xorasan*, which is a region to the east … *K'usti Kapkoh*, which is the region of the Caucasian mountains, in which there are thirteen lands: Atrpatakan; Armn, which is Armenia; Varǰan,

[79] Ter-Łevondyan 1958, Łevondyan 1968.

[80] *Zand ākāsīh* 1956, 32–3, 66–7, 90–1. Âṭar-pâṭakān also appears: 114–15, 256–7, 266–7. See also Ghodrat-Dizaji 2007.

[81] *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* 2002, 21. Lukonin 1983, 732 considers this a "post-Sasanian work," presumably due to the appearance of Manṣūr.

[82] Širakac'i 1881, 53, notes that this is a mistake, but does not offer the correction. Markwart 1901, 16–19.

which is Georgia; Ṙan, which is Albania; Balasakan; Sisakan; Aṙē; Gezan; Šančan; Dlmunk‘; Dmbawand; Taprəstan; Ṙwan; Aml …[83]

This passage, as R. Gyselen and T. Greenwood both point out, is clearly dependent on a Sasanian source, as Širakac‘i feels the need to offer an Armenian translation for the Middle Persian toponyms Armn, Ṙan, and Varǰan[84] and uses the Middle Persian words *kūst* and *kapkōh*.[85]

Whether Širakac‘i’s K‘usti Kapkoh is directly comparable to Kūst-i Ādūrbādagān of *The Provincial Capitals of Iran* is ambiguous. In fact, Ph. Gignoux goes as far as to suggest that the entire schema of administrative organization by the four cardinal directions is nothing but a literary trope signifying the universality of imperial rule.[86] This view has fallen out of favor, most significantly with R. Gyselen’s publication of seals belonging to Sasanian officials of each of the provinces, including seals of the *spāhbed* and *āmārgar* of Kūst-i Ādūrbādagān.[87] The latter explicitly references Albania and Azerbaijan as the responsibility of a single tax collector. Furthermore, the fourfold division of the Sasanian Empire has been used to explain the appearance of four crescents on Sasanian coins.[88] On the face of it, this is not a particularly convincing interpretation unless we consider that the Middle Persian text *Primal Creation* named four stars, one to guard each of the four regions: Tishtar over the East; Sataves, the West; Vanand, the South; and Haptōring, the North.[89] The stars evident on Anūshirwān’s coins may indeed indicate

[83] Širakac‘i 1881, 40: Պարսից աշխարհ ընդ չորս բաժանի այսպէս. Քուստի Խորասան, որ է կողմ արեւմտեայ … Քուստի Նմռոջ, որ է կողմն միջօրեայ որ է հարաւ … Քուստի Խորասան, որ է կողմ արեւելից … Քուստի Կապկոհ, որ է կողմն Կաւկասու լերանց, յորում են աշխարհ երեքտասան. Ատրապատական, Արմն (որ է) Հայք, Վարջան՝ որ է Վիրք, Ռան՝ որ է Աղուանք, Բալասական, Սիսական, Առէ, Գեզան, Շանճան, Դլմունք, Դմբաւանդ, Տապրըստան, Ռւան, Ամլ …

[84] Greenwood 2002, 339, 2008, 18.

[85] Greenwood 2008, 18; Gyselen 2000, 214–15; for use of *Kapkoh* in Armenian, see Hübschmann 1908, 45.

[86] Gignoux 1984, 4.

[87] Gyselen 2000. Note, however, that the second seal treats Armenia as separate from kūst-ī Ādurbādakān. Since the seals do not explicitly define the province, they cannot be definitive proof of the veracity of the *Šahrestānīha ī Ērānšahr* or *Ašxarhac‘oyc‘*. However, Gyselen 2001 collects a number of seals from *spāhbeds* of each *kūst*. For the north, see 4a (p. 44) and 4b (p. 45).

[88] Morony 1984, 40.

[89] Adontz 1970, 169: “There is no doubt in this case that these cosmological concepts of the Persians were a direct reflection of the administrative divisions of Persia, of its division into four commands.” *Zand Ākāsīh* 1956, 31–3.

the universality of Sasanian rule, but they also attest the fourfold division of the empire.[90]

In any case, ʿAbbāsid-era historians considered this a true rendition of Sasanian administration. Moreover, there are some indications that the grouping of many provinces into a single entity also occurred in the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods. For our present purposes, the actual Sasanian administrative delineations may not be as relevant as the memory of the land and its administrative history.

Memory of Sasanian Geography in Arabic Sources: Jarbī

The quadripartite division of the Sasanian Empire is a common feature in Arabic histories. Ṭabarī, who may have relied on the Sasanian *Book of Kings*,[91] specifically states that at the start of the reign of Anūshirwān there was already a "governor (Middle Persian: *pādhgōspān*; Arabic: *fādhūsbān*) of Azerbaijan, Armenia and its domains, Danbāwand, Ṭabaristān and its domains."[92] According to this account, Anūshirwān's innovation was to appoint four military commanders (Arabic: *iṣbahadh*; Middle Persian: *spāhbed*; Parthian: *spāδpat*; Armenian: *sparapet*; Georgian: *spaspeti*),[93] one to each province: "And the king divided this state and among four *iṣbahadhs*, among them is the *iṣbahadh* of the east, which is Khurāsān and its environs; the *iṣbahadh* of the west (*al-maghrib*); the *iṣbahadh* of Nīmrūz, which is Yemen; and the *iṣbahadh* of Azerbaijan and its environs, which is the land of the Khazars and its environs."[94]

Ibn Khurradādhbih provides a name and definition for Ṭabarī's region of Azerbaijan:

[90] The stars first appear on the coinage of Kavād I, Schindel 2013, 830; this corresponds to Ṭabarī's specification about Anūshirwān's reforms (i.e., they were military and not administrative, as described later).

[91] Adontz 1970, 167.

[92] Ṭabarī 1893, I 893: فاذوسبان آذربيجان وارمينية وحيّزها ودنباوند وطبرستان وحيّزها

[93] P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 560–1; Rapp 2014, 75–6.

[94] Ṭabarī 1893, I 894: ففرّق كسرى هذه الولاية والمرتبة بين اربعة اصبهبذين منهم اصبهبذ المشرق وهو خراسان وما والاها واصبهبذ المغرب واصبهبذ نيمروز وهي بلاد اليمن واصبهبذ آذربيجان وما والاها وهي بلاد الخزر; see also Mas'ūdī 1861, II 156–7: وجعل الاصبهبديين اربعةً الاول بجراسان والثانى بالمغرب والثالث ببلاد الجنوب والرابع ببلاد الشمال فهاؤلاء الاربعة هم اصحاب تدبير الملك كل واحد منهم قد افرد بتدبير جزء من اجزآء المملكة وكل واحد منهم صاحب ربع منها; see also Tha'ālibī 1900, 609: قسم مملكته ارباعاً فالربع الاوّل خراسان وما يتّصل بها من طخارستان وزابلستان وسجستان والربع الثانى كور الجبل وهي الرىّ وهمذان ونهاوند والدينور وقوميسين واصبهان وقمّ وقاشان وابهر وزنجان وارمينية وآذربيجان وجرجان وطبرستان والربع الثالث فارس وكرمان والاهواز والربع الرابع العراق الى اليمن وحدود الشأم واطراف الروم وولّى كلًّا من قوّاده ومرازبته ما يستحقّه منها

Jarbī is a land of the North, a quarter of the kingdom. And the *iṣbahabadh* of the North during the epoch of the Persians was called Adharbādhakān *iṣbahabadh*. And in this region were Armenia, Azerbaijan, Rayy, Damāwand … Ṭabaristān, Rūyān, Amul, Sārya, Lāriz, Shiriz, Ṭamīs, Dihistān, Kalār, Jīlān, Badshwārjar … and in this country are Babr, Ṭaylsān, Khazar, Lān, Ṣaqālib, and Abar.[95]

The perception of the Sasanian province Jarbī or *jabal* is recurrent in Arabic histories and, to a lesser extent, geographies. To these few observations gleaned from Ibn Khurradādhbih, Ṭabarī, Masʿūdī, Iṣṭakhrī, and Thaʿālibī, cited earlier, we must add the works of Dīnawarī, Yaʿqūbī, and Yāqūt.[96]

The name Jarbī is etymologically related to the Syriac ܓܪܒܝܐ (*garbyā*), meaning North. Although it could alternatively stem from the Arabic الجربية (northward wind),[97] this, too, is likely a loanword from the Syriac.[98] As the Caucasus is situated north of the Holy Land, the prevalence of its geographical designation as the North in Christian literature, be it in Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, or Greek, stems from biblical exegesis and biblically oriented geographical perspective.[99] Since Jarbī entered Arabic via Syriac, the term's association with the North may simply be a vestige of Christian tradition.

However, S. Rapp recently suggested that we shift the vantage point used to describe the North: "Given Caucasia's longstanding association with Iran, we must consider whether Caucasian notions of the North proceed in part from a conceptualization of the known world in which Iran was the epicenter."[100] This North was appropriated and recast during the Sasanian period. It still designated the Caucasus, but from the vantage point of Iran. "Paralleling the Semitic inclusion of Caucasia within the Northern land of darkness, the Avestan tradition imagined the North as the dominion of dark and cold, the abode of demons."[101] Since

[95] Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 118: والجَرْبىُّ بلاد الشمال ربع المملكة وكان اصبهبذ الشمال على عهد الفرس يسمّى اذربادْكان اصبهبذ وفى هذا الحيّز ارمينية وآذربيجان والريُّ ودُماوَنْد..وفيه طبرستان والرُّويان وآمُل وسارِيَة وشالوس واللّارِز والشَّرّز وطَمِيس ودِهِسْتان والكَلار وجِيلان وبَدَشْوارْجَر… وفي هذا السقع البَيْر والطَّيْلَسان والخزر واللان والصقالب والأبَر.; Ghazarian 1904, 156.

[96] See Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 90, for citations of Yaʿqūbī and Yāqūt and Gignoux 1984, 7, no. 30, for Dīnawarī. See also Ghodrat-Dizaji 2010, 71–2. The passage from Širakacʿi quoted earlier is the most comprehensive discussion of the province in Armenian literature that I am familiar with. Adontz 1970, 434, no. 6, cites a relevant passage from Sebēos.

[97] Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 90.

[98] Sokoloff 2009, 255.

[99] Agatʿangełos 1976, 471–2.

[100] Rapp 2014, 130–1.

[101] Rapp 2014, 131.

Zoroastrians associated the Middle Persian word for North (*abāxtar*) with demons, the toponym *Ādurbādagān* became a convenient stand-in.[102]

Just as Armenia and Azerbaijan appear as the North in Jewish,[103] Christian, and Zoroastrian traditions, so too would Armenia and Azerbaijan become the North for the new center of power in Baghdad. The acceptance of the term Jarbī to indicate the North demonstrates not only that the ʿAbbāsid-era authors inherited Sasanian perceptions about Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also that Christian tradition continued to influence Islamic perspective long after the original Syriac meaning of the term had been forgotten and corrupted into the more familiar *jabal* or *jibāl*, terms that mean "mountains" and came to refer to Media in Arabic sources.

THE UMAYYAD NORTH AND THE BALKHĪ SCHOOL

The fourfold administration of the empire was reintroduced and reworked in the Marwānid period to reflect the needs of the administration that emerged from the Islamic conquests of the seventh century.[104] Jarbī is a more extensive region than any single caliphal province. However, there is some evidence that this schema was more than a simple geographical designation and that it was actually incorporated into the (later) administration of the Caliphate.

Arabic Geography: Riḥāb

Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan appear in most Arabic geographical texts, particularly those of the Balkhī school, in a single chapter, combined on a

[102] Adontz 1970, 167; Ghodrat-Dizaji 2010, 70; Gyselen 2000, 214: "le Nord n'est pas indiqué par le terme approprié *abâxtar.* Le Nord étant considéré comme la région des démons, l'auteur a évité de nommer et l'a remplacé par le mot *Âdurbâdagân* qui correspond à une des provinces septentrionales de l'empire sassanide"; Gyselen 2001, 12–3; Rapp 2014, 131. See also Daryaee, "Šahrestānīhā-ī Ērānšahr," *EIr*: "The usual Middle Persian term for the northern direction, *abāxtar*, is in this text replaced by the province name *ādurbādagān*, because the Zoroastrian association of the north with the abode of evil would be evoked by [the] use of *abāxtar* (Tafażżoli, 1989–90, p. 333; 1997–98, p. 266; Cereti, 2001, p. 203)."

[103] Dunlop 1967, 13: "Poliak has drawn attention to one version of the division of the earth where the Hebrew words for 'north' and 'south' actually appear in the Arabic text."

[104] See Ter-Łevondyan 1958 = Ter-Łevondyan 1968. The survival of the North was not echoed in the West: Morony 1982, 1, and Morony 1984, 125–64, concludes that Sasanian administrative geography did not have a demonstrable effect on the early Islamic province of Iraq.

single map. Iṣṭakhrī introduces the topic by explaining that "as for Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan: we place them in a single map and we make them into a single region."[105] Ibn Ḥawqal, working from Iṣṭakhrī, follows suit and lists the three districts as his chapter heading without offering a toponym for the area. He opens his chapter with the specification:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Albania: and that which surrounds it to the east are [the regions of] Jibāl and Daylam and to the east is the Khazar Sea; and that which surrounds it to the west are the borders (*ḥudūd*) of the Armenians and Lān and parts of the borders (*ḥudūd*) of Jazīra; and that which surrounds it from the direction of the north are Lān and the Caucasian mountains; and that which surrounds it from the south are the borders (*ḥudūd*) of Iraq and part of the borders (*ḥudūd*) of Jazīra.[106]

Muqaddasī calls this area Riḥāb, noting, "we made this region into three districts, the first of which by the [Caspian] Sea is Albania, then Armenia, then Azerbaijan."[107] In fact, the linking of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Albania became so ubiquitous that Abū l-Fidāʾ comments: "these are three great regions that the masters of this art [geography] joined together in descriptions and depictions as they overlap with one another, so that it becomes difficult to mention any single one of them."[108]

The only explicit explanation for such a grouping is provided in Ibn Ḥawqal's tenth-century text:

I have made them into a single region because they are the kingdom of a single person based on what I have witnessed during my own lifetime and on the reports that were passed on about it to those who came before me. For example, Ibn Abī l-Sāj and his servant Mufliḥ and Daysam b. Shādhalawayh and Marzubān b. Muḥammad, known as Sallār and above all, Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, ʿAbd Allāh b. Mālik al-Khuzāʿī, and others.[109]

Ibn Ḥawqal considers the area within the purview of the lord (*ṣāḥib*) of Azerbaijan,[110] a sign of the strength of the Sallārids. While this marks

[105] Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 180: فامّا ارمينية والران واذربيجان فانّا جمعناها في صورة واحدة وجعلناها اقليماً واحداً

[106] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 331: ارمينية واذربيخان والران: والذي يحيط به ممّا يلى المشرق فالجبال والديلم وغربىّ بحر الخزر والذي يحيط به ممّا يلى المغرب حدود الارمن واللان وشيء من حدود الجزيرة والذي يحيط به من جهة الشمال فاللان وجبال القبق والذي يحيط به من الجنوب حدود العراق وشيء من حدود الجزيرة.

[107] Muqaddasī 1906, 374: وقد جعلنا هدا الاقليم ثلاث كور اوّلها من قبل البحيرة الران ثم أرمينية ثم آذربيجان. The name RIḥāb crops up infrequently in Arabic literature. Yāqūt 1995, III 31, includes a short entry: الرّحاب هي ناحية بأذربيجان ودربند وأكثر أرمينية كلّها يشتملها هذا الاسم

[108] Abū l-Fidāʾ 1840, 386: وهذه ثلثة اقاليم عظيمة قد جمعها ارباب هذا الفنّ فى الذكر والتصوير لتداخل بعضها بالبعض وتعسّر افرادها بالذكر

[109] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 331: قد جعلتها إقليمًا واحدًا لأنها مملكة إنسان واحد فيما شاهدته سائر عمرى وما نقلت الأخبار به لمن تقدّمنى كابن أبى الساج ومفلح غلامه وديسم ابن شاذلويه والمرزبان بن محمّد المعروف بالسّلار آنفًا وسالفًا لمثل الفضل ابن يحيى وعبد الله بن مالك الخزاعىّ وغيرهما

[110] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 347: وهى مملكة تحت يد صاحب اذربيجان

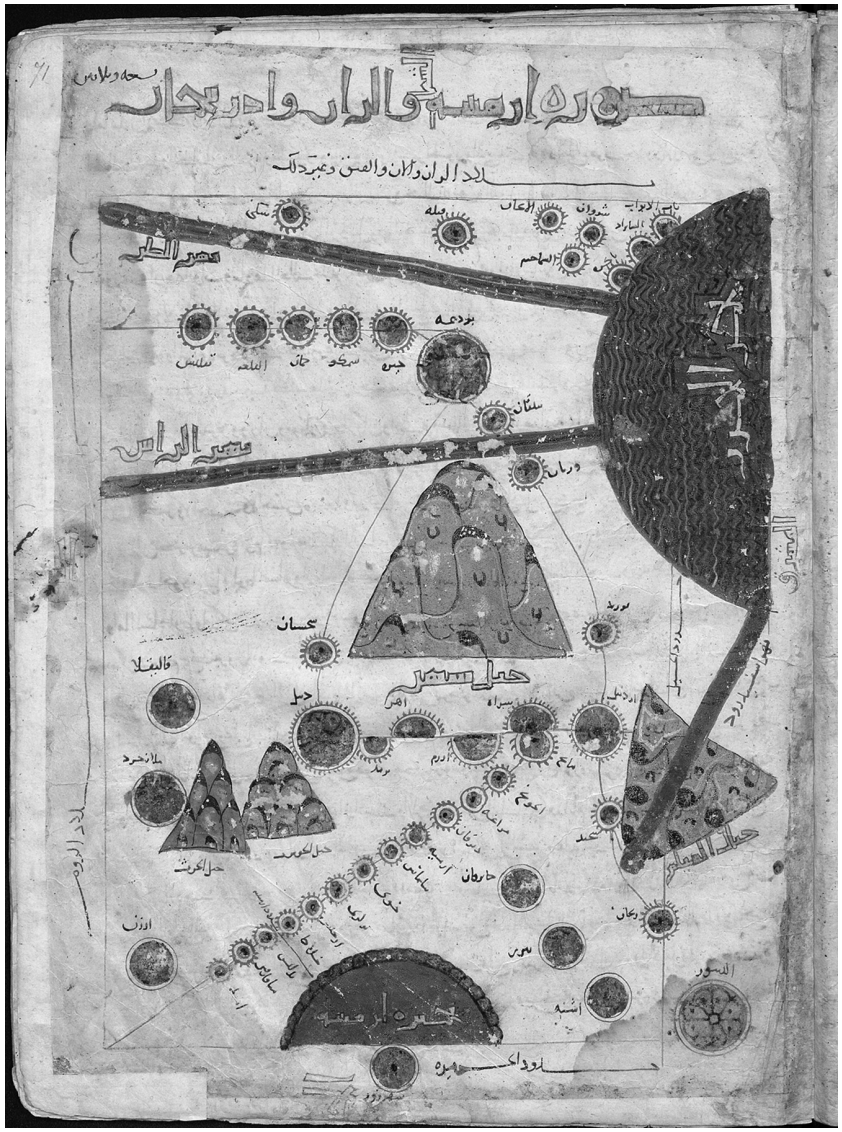

FIGURE 2.2 Map of Armenia, Caucasian Albania, and Azerbaijan found in Iṣṭakhrī's tenth-century geography. The manuscript dates to 1193. Leiden University Library, ms. Or. 3101.

Ibn Ḥawqal's knowledge as evidence of Armenia after the fall of direct caliphal control (as does the mention of the borders of the Armenians, which separates his Armenia from Bagratuni territories), he also assumes that the combination of the three provinces was inherited from the earlier

period, as Faḍl b. Yaḥyā and ʿAbd Allāh b. Mālik al-Khuzāʿī both served in the North under Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809). Armenian sources dating to the period of caliphal rule also recognize that governors ruled Armenia and Azerbaijan together. Łewond mentions that Hārūn al-Rashīd combined the governorship of Albania, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.[111]

Written sources confirm that several Marwānid and ʿAbbāsid governors controlled not only Armenia and Albania in tandem, but also a larger territory that frequently included Azerbaijan and occasionally Jazīra and (rarely) an even more expansive swath of territory in Iran. N. Nicol reviews a list of governors from the early ʿAbbāsid period and takes issue with V. Minorsky's assertion that Azerbaijan was "usually" under the jurisdiction of the same governor as Armenia and Albania, claiming that "the combined administration of Azerbaijan with Armenia and Arran occurred less often than Minorsky's statement would appear to purport."[112] Nicol came to this conclusion for a number of reasons. He generally preferred chronicles over geographical works, rarely citing some pivotal sources in his chapter about the North. He also did not make use of most of A. Ter-Łevondyan's work, since it is written mainly in Armenian. But most importantly, Nicol's study is focused on a restricted period.

Ter-Łevondyan attempts to reconcile the super-Armenia paradigm with the more common description of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Albania by suggesting that Armenia did in fact include Georgia and Albania, but that it was then combined with Azerbaijan under a single viceroy (*poxarkʻay*) during the Umayyad period in order to strengthen the border against both the Byzantines and the Khazars.[113] This is certainly a feasible and convenient response. We must then question why Arabic geographies group Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan. Would it not have been more correct and succinct to omit Albania as part of Armenia and instead say merely Armenia and Azerbaijan? Several of the geographers explain that

[111] Łewond, ed. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 127v: Յետ սորա կացեալ ահարոն որդի մահմետի.եղբայր մուսէի. ազահ եւ արծաթասէր: և սա յաւուրս իշխանութեանն ունէր հակառակորդ զեղբայր իւր ովբեղլա, եւ վասն հակառակութեանն որ ընդ միմեանս բաժանէր եւ տայր եղբաւր իւրում զատրպատ ական եւ զՀայս.հանդերձ վրաւք եւ աղուանիւք: Łewond 1857, 200.

[112] Nicol 1979, 122, n. 7. For Minorsky's comment, which was based on Muqaddasī, a source that Nicol does not cite in this chapter, see Minorsky, "Ādharbaydhān," EI². See also Ghazarian 1904, 193–4: "Im Verlauf der arabischen Herrschaft bildete Armenien nicht immer eine Statthalterschaft für sich, sondern es war häuftig der Bestandteil einer grösseren, welche Adherbeijān und Mesopotamien (Djezīra), zuweilen auch Mausil umfasste."

[113] Ter-Łevondyan 1976b, 161.

Dabīl/Duin is the capital of Armenia, Bardhʿa/Partaw of Albania, and Ardabīl of Azerbaijan;[114] why list Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw separately if the latter refers to a city in Armenia? And why omit Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi as a regional capital if we include Bardhʿa/Partaw? Part of this can be explained by the fact that the administration of the North certainly did not remain static from the Marwānids into the early ʿAbbāsid period. Both Manṣūr and Hārūn al-Rashīd, for example, are known for their reforms of the frontiers.[115] But we must also consider the source of our information, given that the provinces' organization appears differently depending on the school of geography. The Balkhī geographers writing in Arabic include Albania because they were more concerned with fitting the North into the Islamic milieu, a process that conveniently tied it to the norms of Sasanian geography.

There are two problems in moving from Jarbī (later perception of Sasanian administrative geography) to Riḥāb (caliphal administrative geography). First, Jarbī is a larger province, including more than just Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan. This is tempered by the fact that many governors held the North in conjunction with other provinces, such as Jazīra.[116] Second, jumping from Sasanian administration to ʿAbbāsid geography is particularly problematic because we cannot assume that the administrative continuity is actual or constructed without concrete evidence from the conquest and Sufyānid periods. At best, we can only fill in a few blanks about inchoate Marwānid control, jumping over about half a century.

Caliphal Governors and Their Coins

Numismatic evidence from the Marwānid period supports the suggestion that caliphal administration is comparable to the descriptions of Jarbī

[114] E.g. Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 188: وامّا دبيل فانّها مدينة اكبر من اردبيل وهى قصبة ارمينية وبها دار الامارة كما انّ دار الامارة بالران برذعة ودار الامارة باذربيجان اردبيل

[115] Bonner 1996, 66ff; Greenwood 2000, 222: In 169AH, the coins of Armenia are minted with the name Ḥasan; Albania with Rawḥ; Azerbaijan with Nuṣayr. "This implies an administrative separation of the three provinces, with a governor appointed for each. This progressive separation and administrative elaboration should be associated to the political ascendancy of Harun in the Caucasus and northern frontier regions, reported by Tabari as taking place in 163 AH." If we consider the separation of the three provinces (Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan) as the result of the policies of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and indeed there is no reason not to, this means that the tenth-century Arabic geographical treaties are describing ʿAbbāsid-era administration.

[116] Ghazarian 1904, 194.

in Arabic literature. The intermittent minting patterns from the North are only comprehensible if, in fact, caliphal administration is based on a broader geographical unit. M. Bates discusses an administrative unit for the "Umayyad North" (read: Jarbī) in which there was a single mint producing dirhams that moved about in accordance with the location of the governor.[117] The years for which multiple mints are attested indicate that the governor's seat was transferred and that the administrative center was accordingly in two places during the same year. Bates then compares the attested mint locations to the seat of the governor according to the written record. He determines that the production of coins at any particular mint is dependent on the presence of the governor. This theory allows Bates to conjecture about lacunae in the written sources.

More important for the current discussion, Bates is able to generalize that Marwānid administration of the North went through a number of phases. First, the governor remained in Jazīra and Mawṣil during the conquest period, then he moved to Armenia to lead the campaigns in the North. Finally, during the warfare of the last years of the Umayyad period, the governor remained in the more secure lands of the south, mainly Jazīra.[118] This shift to the south and the extensive ties between Armenia and Jazīra throughout the period of caliphal control are a convenient explanation for the choice of toponym, given the Syriac etymology for Jarbī.

There are two significant exceptions to Bates's theory. He ties the mints of Hārūnābād, Hārūniyya, Maʿdin Bājunays, and Muḥammadiyya to the Bājunays/Apahunikʿ mine; presumably these remain stationary due to the local discovery of silver.[119] Additionally, the coins minted in Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband in 711–12 show stylistic and epigraphic inconsistencies for northern coins, bearing more resemblance to the output of the mint of Wāsiṭ, possibly as the result of a separate minting operation performed in spite of the governor's absence.[120] These exceptions are immaterial to the usefulness of Bates's theory: he demonstrates convincingly that coins produced in the mints of Armenia, Albania, Jazīra, and Azerbaijan are all very likely directly linked. While Robinson responded that "the coinage cannot be taken so far as to suggest a single administrative unit,"[121] Ter-Łevondyan's viceroys (*poxarkʿays*), as perhaps more easily demonstrable

[117] Bates 1989, 92.
[118] Bates 1989, 102.
[119] Bates 2011.
[120] Spellberg 1988.
[121] Robinson 2000, 53.

in ʿAbbāsid administration, offer plausible conciliation. The viceroys, noticeable in the written sources through their appointment of administrators into lesser posts and in the numismatic evidence through specific formulae,[122] would control a large territory and appoint regional administrators.

For a particularly famous example, Afshīn Ḥaydār b. Kāʿūs al-Usrūshanī, Apʻšin in Armenian, was based in Barzand from 835 to 839/40 and sent a number of governors to rule Armenia and Albania in his name, including Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Samarqandī and Muḥammad b. Khālid Bukhārākhudā, whose title in Armenian is corrupted to read Bulxar Xoyta Pʻatgos, where *pʻatgos* is the Armenicized version of the New Persian *patgospan* (cf. Ṭabarī's Arabic *fādhūsbān* to refer to the Middle Persian *pādhgōspān* of Anūshirwān).[123] Afshīn similarly appointed his brother-in-law Mankjūr al-Farghānī over Azerbaijan in 838/9. Indeed, many of the caliphal governors of Armenia and Albania around this time were in fact dispatched against Bābak's rebellion in neighboring Azerbaijan. In this example, Afshīn was the governor (or, following Ter-Łevondyan's terminology, the viceroy) of the North, but others administered the individual provinces separately.

In hypothesizing a large "North" consisting of multiple provinces, Bates's analysis provides numismatic support for the implementation of an administrative model reminiscent of Sasanian geography in the Marwānid period. This still does not allow us to speak of actual administrative continuity. All of the coins of Bates's study were minted after the Marwānid Reforms. It is no surprise that the first person on the list of governors over the Umayyad North is Muḥammad b. Marwān, the brother of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, who came to the North in the aftermath of the second *fitna* to (re)stake caliphal claim over the province. In his *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest*, C. Robinson argues that "the province of al-Jazīra was invented by the Marwānids"[124] and we must say the

[122] On the formulae for viceroys v. subregional governors, see Vardanyan 2016, 204-5.

[123] Dowsett 1957, 459, n. 7 and 461, n. 2 and 3, offer manuscript variants of this title: Բովխար Խուտա Փատգոս, Բուլխար Խոյտա Փատգոս, and Բուլխարխոյ Տափատգոս, but Dowsett leaves Pʻatgos unresolved. Minorsky 1958, 57, identifies the word *pʻatgos* as an abbreviation of *patgospan* in reference to another governor mentioned in Dasxuranc'i's text: Muḥammad b. Khālid b. Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī. On the Bukhārākhudā, see La Vaissière 2007, 175–6; Laurent & Canard 1980, 441–3, n. 73; Markwart 1903, 461; Nalbandyan 1958, 120, n. 89; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 126, n. 99; Vasmer 1931, 84.

[124] Robinson 2000, 63.

same of Armenia and Albania, along with most other provinces including the East.[125] Although Armenia and Albania certainly existed from a much earlier period, *caliphal* Armenia and Albania appeared only after the second *fitna* and the Marwānid Reforms. The decentralized nature of the conquest and Sufyānid periods indicates that the provinces were largely independent, fractionalized along local concerns, and at most merely tributary to the Caliphate until the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century. We return to the significance of the Marwānid Reforms in the history of the North in Chapter 6; here it suffices to note that we have no sources to suggest the survival of a Sasanian administrative model in the conquest and Sufyānid periods. Sebēos's seventh-century *History* includes a treaty that promises no caliphal presence in the North and Łewond's eighth-century *Book of History* does not refer to caliphal governors before the Marwānid Reforms.[126]

Arabic sources preserve occasional references to governors appointed over both Armenia and Azerbaijan before the Marwānid Reforms, notably during the conquest period, such as Mughīra b. Shuʿba, Qāsim b. Rabīʿa b. Umayya b. Abī l-Salt al-Thaqafī, and Ashʿath b. Qays. Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra (r. 686–7) was, interestingly, a commander and governor of Khurāsān who was briefly appointed over the North by Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr, the brother of ʿAbd Allāh.[127] The suggestion that the North saw a Zubayrid governor during the second *fitna* necessarily challenges any assumption of continuity, as we cannot assume that the Umayyads had any reasonable claim to the North in any capacity before Muḥammad b. Marwān brought the territory under his brother's control after Ibn al-Zubayr's death. Without numismatic record or corroboration from Armenian texts, there is no reason to believe that the Sufyānids or the Zubayrids had particularly a strong presence (or, indeed, any presence) in the North.

[125] Haug 2010, 224; Johns 2003 would extend this to the entire Sufyānid Caliphate, which was "a loose confederation of Arab tribes, not a hegemonic state." Hoyland 2006, 398-403 levels some counterarguments against Johns's "loose confederation," in particular for the East, citing coins minted in the name of Muʿāwiya as far East as Darabgird. Others have suggested more Umayyad involvement in Syria itself: Whitcomb 2016, and possibly Egypt: Papaconstantinou 2009, 64, 2008, 141: "Only after 705 do we see Arabs as local governors and have evidence of Arab scribes for documents"; see also Hoyland 2006 on Egypt.

[126] Greenwood 2000, 220.

[127] Laurent & Canard 1980, 409–12; Ṭabarī 1879, II 750; on his relation to Khurāsān, see Luce 2009, 229–37.

CONCLUSION

Despite the appearance of Byzantine toponyms in Arabic geographical treatises, the descriptions of the North in Balkhī geographies reveal the echoes of Sasanian legacies. The traditional Romano-Byzantine organization of Armenia appears muddled and infrequently in Arabic, an example of how Arabic geographical works did not preserve Greek traditions faithfully. The idea of a super-Armenia consisting of Armenia, Albania, and Georgia is first attested in a pre-Islamic Syriac source and finds support only in the Iraqi school. In particular, super-Armenia is difficult to locate in Arabic because of its explicit inclusion of Georgia as a separate entity. Arabic sources, drawing on patterns of caliphal administration, collapsed eastern Georgia into Albania; in this, they follow the norms established in the Sasanian period.

The Byzantine administrative paradigms and super-Armenia are largely red herrings. Instead, the Sasanian administrative unit, K'usti Kapkoh in Armenian or Kūst-i Ādūrbādagān in Persian, is reinvented in the Marwānid period as Jarbī in Arabic from the Syriac *garbyā*, or North. There is textual and numismatic evidence that Marwānid administrative norms and ʿAbbāsid-era geographical treatises built (albeit in different ways) on Sasanian legacy. The lack of sources from the conquest and Sufyānid periods coupled with the primacy of local rule in the North suggests that this is not the product of actual continuity.

3

Lost Greek Kings and Hoodwinked Khazars

Sasanian and Byzantine Legacy in the Construction of Caliphal Frontiers in the North

In the tenth century, a vizier named Abū Dulaf regaled the Būyid court with tales of his youthful trips to distant lands. In his stories, if maybe not in real life, he traveled to China, Central Asia, and India. He also claims to have visited the North, an assertion backed up by a close study of the details of his travel memoires.[1] Abū Dulaf describes Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi as "a town beyond which there is no Islam."[2] With this comment, the traveler and littérateur made an explicit distinction between Islamic and non-Islamic lands and, further, the exact location where one is distinguished from the other. The North was important to ʿAbbāsid-era historians and geographers because it delineated the Caliphate from other major powers: Byzantium to the west and the Turkic and Khazar tribes to the north. This demonstrates a conceptual divide between the Caliphate and its neighbors that was written into ʿAbbāsid-era cosmography.

Armenia and Albania were the bulwark against the enemies of the Caliphate. This frontier, though, is mainly a literary construction, designed to paint strict divisions between the polities by locating it as a destination of *mujāhid*s and as an impenetrable line of fortresses. In this effort, it was important to stress the inclusion of the North as caliphal territory. As the anonymous tenth-century *Borders of the World* claims, these

[1] Bulliet, "Abū Dolaf al-Yanbūʿī," *EIr*; Abū Dulaf 1955, 23.

[2] Abū Dulaf 1955, 35 and 6: وسرت من هناك فى بلد الأرمن حتى انتهيت الى تفليس وهى مدينة لا اسلام وراءها. Note: the manuscript of Abū Dulaf's letter is missing the لا so this actually reads "beyond which there is Islam." Minorsky supplies the negation based on how this same tradition appears in Yāqūt's later *Muʿjam al-buldān*. It is worth reconsidering, given the tenth-century accounts, such as the travelogue of Ibn Faḍlān 2003, that we have about Muslim populations past Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi. The rendering given here depends on the assumption that Abū Dulaf means "Islam" as both a geographical and religious definition.

provinces were, in fact, "the most pleasant places in *dār-i islām*."[3] Because of this agenda, the idea of a buffer zone "entre Byzance et l'Islam" sits uncomfortably with the description of the frontiers (*thughūr*) in Arabic geographical texts. The frontiers maintain their significance because of their conceptual role, built at least in part by the reinterpretation of the regions' Byzantine and Sasanian past. The manipulation of historical traditions about Byzantine and Sasanian presence in the North reveals that the regions' Iranian identity was pivotal in the construction of the frontier.

Here we look first at the descriptions of borders (*ḥudūd*) and frontiers (*thughūr*) in the late ninth- and tenth-century Arabic accounts and we problematize the reliance on buffer zones and "protectresses" (*ʿawāṣim*). We also review the foundation narratives of Qālīqalā/Karin and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband as case studies of how the authors of these same geographies and histories constructed the conceptual frontier in reference to the regions' Iranian identity. The Iranian character of the frontier, as depicted in Arabic sources, makes a comparative approach with other caliphal frontiers particularly productive. Iranian cosmography informs ʿAbbāsid-era geographical treatises, offering a convenient explanation for the perceived continuity between Sasanian and caliphal rule in the North.

DESCRIBING THE CALIPHAL FRONTIER

Armenia and Albania appear in Arabic geographical treatises not only as provinces, but as the defining line between the Caliphate and other empires, notably Byzantium and Khazaria. Historians and geographers writing in Arabic recognized the North as Islamic territory because it was here, past Qālīqalā/Karin and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, that Muslims met and engaged with non-Muslim forces. Even if the border was not quite as demarcated on the ground, in literature these appear as strongholds to defend Islam. We start here with the Arabic descriptions of the frontiers before moving on to make sense of them in the Iranian context.

Defining the Ḥudūd *and* Thughūr

Accounting for the choice of vocabulary for borders (*ḥadd*, pl. *ḥudūd*) or frontiers (*thaghr*, pl. *thughūr*) in descriptions of Armenia and Albania may be an impossible or a fruitless task, since each geographer divides the

[3] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1962, 158: این جایهاست بسیار نعمت ترین ناحیتهاست اندر اسلام.

land differently, both internally and externally. The term *ḥadd* refers to a "hindrance, impediment, limit, boundary, [or] frontier."[4] It can refer to any type of geographical entity: a city, a province, or Islam as a whole. R. Brauer adds that "both texts and cartographic representation thus concur in implying a concept of boundaries *within* the broad confines of the Islamic Empire that is not that of a sharp transition from one political entity to the next, but rather a gradual interpenetration of the adjoining communities."[5] We should therefore expect the *ḥudūd* to be somewhat malleable, but employed exclusively as internal boundaries in the Caliphate. The only direct mention of the *ḥudūd* of the North as indefinite or malleable borderlands comes from an anonymous tenth-century Persian geographical treatise, *Borders of the World*, which states that Albania, Armenia, and Azerbaijan "are adjacent to each other. Their country-sides enter into each other."[6]

Still, Brauer's hypothesis that the term *ḥadd* is only used to designate internal boundaries does not withstand scrutiny, at least in the case of the geographies about the North. Many of the *ḥudūd* listed in Ibn al-Faqīh's geography are external: from Bardhʿa/Partaw to Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, Byzantium, the Sarīr, the Laks, and between the Alans and the Khazars.[7] Iṣṭakhrī claims that the regions of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan are all *ḥudūd*, and that "the *ḥadd* of Albania is from Bāb al-Abwāb to Tiflīs." He also names a *ḥadd* between Albania and the Laks.[8] Ibn Ḥawqal lists *ḥudūd* against Byzantium, the Lān, and Jazīra.[9] *Borders of the World* mentions *ḥudūd* against Byzantium, the Khazars, and the Sarīr. This text also labels the borders between Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan as *ḥudūd*.[10] Each of these geographies also lists individual cities as *ḥudūd*, though these are usually in Albania: Janza/Ganjak, Shamkūr, Shakkī/Šakʿē, Bardhʿa/Partaw, and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. These are just a few examples out of many,

[4] Schacht, de Vaux, & Goichon, "Ḥadd," *EI*². See Lane & Lane-Poole 1863, I 525; Ibn Manẓūr 1883, III 140: الحدّ الفصل بين الشّيئين لئلّا يختلط أحدهما بالآخر أو لئلّا يتعدّى أحدهما على الآخر وجمعه حدود. وفصل ما بين كلّ شيئين حدّ بينهما. ومنتهى كلّ شيء حدّه: ومنه أحد حدود الأرضين وحدود الحرم وفي الحديث في صفة القرآن: لكلّ حرف حدّ ولكلّ حدّ مطلع: قتل أراد لكلّ منتهى نهاية. ومنتهى كلّ شيء حدّه.

[5] Brauer 1995, 13.

[6] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 142, 1962, 157–8: سه ناحيتست بيكديگرپيوسته وسوادهاءايشان بيكديگر اندر شده

[7] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 286 and 295.

[8] Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 180: *ḥudūd* of the east, Islam, Rūm, Jazīra, Iraq; 181: between Armenians and Lān; 188: Bagratid land, Jazīra; 189: Janza and Shamkūr; 190: the *ḥadd* of Albania is from Bāb al-Abwāb to Tiflīs/Tpʿilisi, the *ḥudūd* of Azerbaijan, Albania, and Armenia.

[9] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 331: Rūm, Jazīra, Lān; 343: between Interior and Exterior Armenia; 345: Janza, Shamkūr; 347: Bāb al-Abwāb.

[10] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1962, 158: Rūm, Khazars, Sarīr, Jazīra, Iraq; 162: between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Albania, Shakkī.

but they demonstrate that the *ḥudūd* of the North are not necessarily internal to the Caliphate. The term *ḥadd* here has a much broader meaning, tied to the idea of a border in general.

Meanwhile, the term *thaghr*, pl. *thughūr*, is much more specific. It literally refers to the gap between one's front teeth and, by extension, any open space or gap. The corresponding Greek, στόματα, means "mouths."[11] The term refers to the "points of entry between Dār al-Islām and Dār al-Ḥarb beyond it. It is more specifically used in the plural for the lines of fortifications protecting the gaps along such frontiers as that in south-eastern Anatolia between the Arabs and Byzantines."[12] According to Yāqūt, a *thaghr* is "every place that is near to the land of the enemy."[13]

There is a much more uniform description of the *thughūr* in the North. Iṣṭakhrī labels Qālīqalā/Karin and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi as *thughūr*; Ibn Ḥawqal: Qālīqalā/Karin, Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, and Jazīra; Muqaddasī, the entire region of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan; *Borders of the World*: Malāzkirt and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi; Idrīsī: Balkhab, Qālīqalā/Karin, Jazīra, and Byzantium.[14] The interesting point about these entries is their relative conformity, with Qālīqalā/Karin and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi predominating as the most recognized *thughūr* of the caliphal North.

Significantly, the geographers consistently describe these cities with explicit reference to military campaigns. This implies a certain assumption about the nature of the frontier as a barrier against neighboring states and a site of prolonged warfare. For example, Iṣṭakhrī mentions the *thaghr* of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi four times, explaining in one case that "it is one of the great, important *thughūr* because there are many enemies that surround it."[15] As for Qāliqalā/Karin, Iṣṭakhrī writes that "the *thaghr* that is adjacent to the Byzantines [Rūm] from Armenia is Qāliqalā and the people of Azerbaijan raid against it."[16] Ibn Ḥawqal gives a few examples of *thughūr* and specifically links them to war: Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi is "a great *thaghr*, with many enemies from every direction."[17] Similarly, Qālīqalā/Karin "was a great *thaghr* belonging to the people of Azerbaijan, Jibāl, Rayy and what

[11] Eger 2015, 8.

[12] Latham & Bosworth, "Al-Thughūr," *EI*². See also Lane & Lane-Poole 1863, I 338–9; Ibn Manẓūr 1883, IV 103: وهذه مدينة فيها ثغر وثلم والثَّغر ما يلى دار الحرب. والثَّغر موضع المخافة من فروج البلدان. وفى الحديث فلمّا مرّ الأجل قفل أهل ذلك الثَّغر: قال الثَّغر الموضع الّذى يكون حدّاً فاصلًا بين بلاد المسلمين والكفّار وهو موضع المخافة من اطراف البلاد.

[13] Yāqūt 1995 II 79: كل موضع قريب من أرض العدوّ يسمّى ثغراً

[14] Idrīsī 1978.

[15] Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 185: وهى احد الثغور الجليلة العظيمة لانّها كثيرة الاعداء الّذين قد حفّوا بها

[16] Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 188: والثغر الّذي يلى الروم من ارمينية قاليقلا واليها يغزو اهل اذربيجان

[17] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 340: وهي ثغرجليل كثير الأعداء من كلّ جهة

is attached to it, in the middle of the country of the Byzantines [Rūm]."[18] He also mentions raiders and *mujāhid*s on their way to Byzantine territory.[19] Muqaddasī describes Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi as well-fortified,[20] but not a *thaghr*. Instead, Muqaddasī's use of the word *thaghr* stretches to include the entire region of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan, and is also only used when linked to the idea of confrontation between Islam and foreign territories. He writes that the region "is a glory to both Islam and to raiders," that it is "a great *thaghr*" where "the Byzantines [Rūm] come against the Muslims."[21] *Borders of the World* mentions two *thughūr*: Manāzkird and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi. Manāzkird is "against the Byzantines [Rūm]. The people are warlike and the place pleasant."[22] Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi is situated "against the infidels."[23]

The term *thaghr* – *thughūr*, at least as it appears in the (mainly tenth-century) geographical material relating to the North, thus refers to either an entire territory on the edges of Islam or, more frequently, to specific towns that are almost always explicitly linked to war, raiding, or *jihād*. This idea of warfare extending outside of the boundaries of Islam is the pivotal aspect of the definition, as plenty of cities and towns listed in the geographical works as *ḥudūd* are strongly fortified, but still do not graduate to the status of *thughūr*.[24]

The Problem of Buffer Zones (and: Why Did Albanian Fail Where Armenian and Georgian Succeeded?)

Given this description of the frontiers, we should be concerned about relegating the North to buffer zones between Byzantium and the Caliphate. Armenia is famously "entre Byzance et l'Islam," a trope we have leaned on for too long. While J. Laurent's study *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam* (1919, updated by M. Canard in 1980) remains today the best introduction to Armenia in the eighth and ninth centuries, the argument that Armenia was "between two worlds" presupposes a binary division of the world in which Armenians are consistently alien. Laurent's goal, though, was not to propose a theory of otherness of Armenian identity, but to

[18] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 343: وكانت قاليقلا في وسط بلد الروم ثغراً عظيماً لأهل اذربيجان والجبال والرى وما والاها

[19] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 353: ومن آمد الى حرّان على الطريق الذي تسلكه الغزاة والمجاهدون الى شمشاط وعلى سميساط الى ملطية نحو خمسة ايام

[20] Muqaddasī 1906, 375.

[21] Muqaddasī 1906, 373: وهو مع هذا ثغر جليل واقليم نبيل and وهو للاسلام فخر وللغازين

[22] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 143, 1962, 160: ملازگرد ثغريست برروى رومیان ومردمانى جنگى وجاييى بانعمت

[23] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1937, 144, 1962, 162: ثغرست بر روى كافران

[24] *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* 1962, 162.

reclaim some modicum of agency for the Armenians as actors in their own history instead of passive receptors of imperial agendas. This is a common theme in descriptions of frontier societies. A. Eger notes that there is a modern assumption that "whoever lived there [in the frontiers] were passive actors in a larger epic drama, extras on a film set."[25] We might wholeheartedly support Laurent's agenda, then, but still recognize the close cultural and political ties, or indeed the inclusion of the North in the Caliphate, without furthering the presumption of otherness. Given the popularity of the figure of the *ɫarib*, "foreigner," in later Armenian literature, we should expect that this sense of otherness is deeply rooted in the Armenian consciousness, yet the expression of this otherness with an Arabic cognate, *ghārib*, neatly belies the cultural and literary ties between Armenia and its neighbors.[26]

Designating the North as a buffer "entre Byzance et l'Islam" implies that the area itself was neither Byzantium nor Islam. This may, in fact, have been the case: perhaps the provinces did function as buffer zones. This fits the circumstances of the conquest and Sufyānid periods, when the North was a tributary vassal instead of a caliphal province.[27] It also corresponds to the frontier as described in some Byzantine sources as the Byzantine policy of scorched earth cleared the frontier in the eighth century.[28] Yet as C. Toumanoff points out, "the vying between the Court of Constantinople and those of Ctesiphon and Baghdad in cajoling the Armenian and Georgian dynasts into a position of vassals" was an important expression of territorial reach. Byzantium veered from that policy only later, and the result was Manzikert.[29]

Our task here, though, is not to describe the frontier *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, but to account for the traditions about the provinces as they appear in Arabic sources. The Arabic geographical treatises, with their consistent definition and descriptions of the *thughūr*, certainly project the assumption that Armenia and Albania were caliphal territory, at least from the Marwānid Reforms on when we find caliphal governors residing in Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw,[30] censuses and tax collectors, and mints coining dirhams in the names of the caliphs.[31]

[25] Eger 2015, 6. He cites Wittek: "a frontier culture will be, in most cases, necessarily primitive. It will be a cast-off from the high culture of the interior."
[26] Pifer 2014.
[27] Kaegi 1994, 202.
[28] Haldon & Kennedy 1980, 83 and 97.
[29] Toumanoff 1956, 409, 1963, 12.
[30] On the governors of Armenia and Albania, see Ghazarian 1904; Nalbandyan 1958; Nicol 1979; Petermann 1840; Ter-Łevondyan 1977; Vardanyan 2011; Vasmer 1931.
[31] On Umayyad- and ʿAbbāsid-era coins struck in Armenia and Albania, see Bates 1989, 2011; Bonner, 1989; Ebeyan 1940; Mušełyan 1971, 1973a, 1973b, 1977, 1980a,

The North was ethnically, politically, and religiously different from other provinces in the Caliphate, but presumably no one would assume that the Caliphate itself was ethnically, politically, and religiously uniform, a political monolith with an enduring and unchanging nemesis. Armenia and Albania were religiously distinct from the rest of the Islamic world, yet we can hardly suggest that these provinces were bastions of Christianity surrounded by Muslim-majority provinces. Christianity, even a stridently local rendition of Christianity, cannot differentiate Armenia and Albania from the other caliphal provinces like Syria, Jazīra, and Egypt, where there were similarly local expressions of Christianity in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods. Armenia and Albania were ethnically distinct from the rest of the Islamic world, but we certainly do not assume that the central lands of the Caliphate were ethnically homogeneous. In short, there is little to suggest that Armenia and Albania were any different from the other provinces of the Caliphate until they fell out of direct caliphal control in 861 yet were strong enough to resist reintegration into the ʿAbbāsid revival.

In fact, the only things that differentiate the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid North from other caliphal provinces are closely tied to both the question of continuity and the broader perceptions of the Iranian *oikoumene*. Ter-Łevondyan points out that Armenians retained their own language even as other Christians in the Caliphate, notably those in Syria and Egypt, shifted to languages traditionally associated with Islam.[32] We could expand his observation to include the survival of Georgian and Albanian, as well. It remains to be demonstrated, though, if it is only with the benefit of hindsight that we recognize the uniqueness of the Armenian and Georgian experiences. Albanians were still speaking Albanian in the tenth century, so the Armenians and Georgians would not have seemed entirely unique in the eighth and ninth centuries. While S. Griffith has established that other Christians of the Near East embraced Arabic very early, it certainly was not evident in the eighth and ninth centuries that Coptic would fail, either.[33]

More importantly for our purposes, we have assumed here that Syria and Egypt are appropriate comparisons because they were both Christian, but they were also transitioning from Byzantine to caliphal rule. There

1980b; Noonan 1980, 1984; Sabbałean 1974, 1975; Salmān 1971; Spellberg 1988; Vardanyan 2011.

[32] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 135.

[33] On Christian Arabic, see Griffith 2015; on the survival of Coptic, see Papaconstantinou 2007.

are significant differences in ex-Byzantine territories, where the "failed" languages were either the *Reichssprache*, the language of administration and the political élite, e.g., Greek, *or* popular languages, e.g., Coptic or Syriac.[34] If we recalibrate to consider the North from the Iranian perspective and compare it instead to other ex-Sasanian provinces, Armenian and Georgian experiences are no longer unique. Despite the extensive use of Arabic in Iran in the early Islamic period, few of the populations of the Iranian *oikoumene*, Muslim or Christian, adopted Arabic. Yarshater credits the survival of Persian as the primary vehicle preserving Iranian identity,[35] but this might well be vice versa, i.e., that Iranian responses to the spread of Arabic facilitated the preservation of the Persian language. In the same way, it makes more sense to see the retention of Armenian and Georgian as a part of the broader process of the Iranian response to the Islamic conquest and the subsequent spread of Arabic in ex-Byzantine territories. In the tenth century, the linguistic landscape of western Iran was so varied that New Persian was not dominant there;[36] the story is about the preservation of Iranian languages, not Persian specifically.

The real question, then, is why Armenian, Georgian, and Persian survived, but Albanian, Sogdian, and Khwarazmian died out some time after the tenth century.[37] It cannot be explained by the difference between

[34] Over the course of the past decade, scholars have debated the persistence of Near Eastern languages in the face of Arabization, especially in Syria and Egypt. Wasserstein, "Why did Arabic succeed where Greek failed? Language change in the Near East after Muhammad" (2003) was followed by Hoyland, "Language and identity: The twin histories of Arabic and Aramaic (and: Why did Aramaic succeed where Greek failed?)" (2004), then Papaconstantinou, "Why did Coptic fail where Aramaic succeeded? Linguistic developments in Egypt and the Near East after the Arab conquest" (2012). There are significant differences moving into Iran: (1) we might question whether Greek or Syriac in fact failed, but it is indisputable in the case of Albanian; (2) we might also see Islamization and Arabization as twin movements in other provinces, but local languages remained predominant in a Muslim-majority Iran even if Arabic became a primary tool of writing until the rise of New Persian. Papaconstantinou 2012, 61, suggests that we should separate the acceptance of Arabic from the abandonment of a language of the masses. Here we might find common ground between Coptic and Albanian.

[35] Yarshater 2009. He identifies language as identity, such that when people of Syria and Iraq Arabized "they quickly shed their former identity" and so broke from their cultural heritage.

[36] Mottahedeh 2012; Peacock 2012.

[37] While it makes sense to see Turkification as the result of the Seljuk conquests, this is not nearly clear-cut. We have no sources to substantiate this in the North, and scholars have found evidence of Sogdian and Khwarazmian in the East after the Seljuk period. Dresden 1983, 1217, situates the failure of Sogdian in the thirteenth century as a result of the Mongol conquests. Mackenzie 1983 does not specify when Khwarazmian declined, but notes its existence into the twelfth century; on this, see also Spuler 2015, 227, n. 122 and 234.

written and oral languages, as Albanian and Sogdian were both in fact written languages, as evidenced by manuscripts, palimpsests, and inscriptions. Further, Persian was resilient enough to switch alphabets from Pahlavi to a revised Arabic; presumably, if authors could adopt the Arabic alphabet to suit the needs of New Persian, so too could they have done the same for Khwarazmian. The vaunted status of the written word cannot explain the extinction of Albanian any more than it can Khwarazmian. So how can we account for the disappearance of Albanian given the survival of Armenian and Georgian? We should look to the other surviving languages of Iran, namely, Persian.

H. Kennedy offers a possible explanation: "The survival of the Persian language and culture was the result of the continuation of a self-consciously Iranian elite many of whose members were committed to the maintenance of Iranian traditions."[38] In other words, Persian was not just the *Reichssprache* of the Sāmānids, but also the *Kultursprache*, the vehicle to express cultural norms as perceived by the élite. This notably holds true for the maintenance of Armenian and Georgian language and culture, as well. Armenian, Georgian, and Persian survived because of the independence of the Bagratunis/Bagrationis, Arcrunis, and Sāmānids, all of whom sponsored literature in the *Reichssprache*. If we follow this line of reasoning, Albanian did not survive because the rulers of Albania did not support or sponsor the writing of texts in Albanian. Similarly, we would presumably know much more about the languages of Daylam had the Būyids not relied on Arabic in their courts. In the cases of western Iran and Albania, the rulers did not represent the ethnic majority and we retain only Arabic sources to tell their history.

Georgian literature provides a fascinating case study for this. Both Armenian and Persian flourished in the tenth century and on, a result of the power of the Bagratunis, the Arcrunis, and the Sāmānids. Meanwhile, the flourishing of Georgian literature came a century later as a result of the political realities of the North. Georgian entered a "second period" of medieval literature in the eleventh century, which Toumanoff ties explicitly to the golden age of Bagrationi power. Even with recent reevaluations of the Georgian histories, the eleventh-century masters Juansher

[38] Kennedy 2009, 13. For an alternative perspective, see Spuler 2015, 213: "This may have been due to the vastness of the space they inhabited and the inaccessibility of many areas, and maybe also the smaller number of Arab invaders [in Iran] compared to Egypt for example. Mostly, however, it was a consequence of its rich culture" under the Sasanians.

Juansheriani and Leonti Mroveli shine particularly bright.[39] This corresponds to the emergence of Georgia (Sak'art'velo) after the unification of K'art'li and Ap'xazet'i and the rise of the power of the Bagrationi kings, fashioned as Kings of Kings (*mep'et'-mep'isa*). The delay in Georgian historical writing as compared to Armenian and Persian strengthens the hypothesis that the tenth- and eleventh-century local élite played a significant role in the preservation of Iranian languages by sponsoring literature to secure and underpin their claims to power.

This issue is also inextricable from the value of genealogy in Iranian society, and represents a major fault line between Byzantine and Iranian cultures. As H. Kennedy continues, "the Sasanian world set a great deal of store on descent: it was a society in which ancestry, real or fictitious, was of enormous importance in determining social status." It is not for naught that R. Bulliet's study of conversion to Islam found its greatest footing in Iran, where local families preserved genealogies of generations predating the rise of Islam. This was not the case in Egypt, where the written record starts with conversion while "Persians could, and did, boast of the achievements of their non-Muslim forebears, the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the former Byzantine lands had no such cultural capital to draw on, no ancestors (real or imagined) of whom they could be proud." Local families preserved their genealogies and a pre-Islamic societal structure due to ingrained memories of hereditary rule, a concept familiar to the Sasanian more than the Byzantine world,[40] which C. Toumanoff labeled as "anti-nobiliary."[41] These local families were the primary vehicles in the preservation of local languages. Accordingly, Armenian and Georgian are spoken today and we retain volumes detailing the affairs of the Armenian *naxarar*s and the Georgian *erist'avi*s, while Coptic is largely a liturgical language.

M. Ghazarian claims that "[d]ie Stellung des Statthalters in Armenien unterschied sich von denjenigen in anderen Provinzen des Reiches dadurch, dass die Vollständige Unterwerfung des Landes, wie in Syrien, ʿIraq und Aegypten, und die gänzliche Ausrottung der Distriktsgrossen bis zur

[39] Even with the amendments required after the publication of Rapp 2003, which argues for an early ʿAbbāsid composition for several works traditionally dated later, the eleventh century was significant for Georgian literature. Toumanoff, 1943, 1956, 418: "The Second Period of Georgian literature was conterminous with – in fact an aspect of – the Golden Age of Georgian history," signaled by the political unification of K'art'li and Ap'xazet'i.

[40] Kennedy 2009, 19–23.

[41] Toumanoff 1963, 39.

Entstehung des Bagratidenreiches nie erreicht wurde."[42] We will return to the issue of the local élite in Chapter 4, but it seems that the élite in the North may very well differentiate Armenia or Albania from former Byzantine provinces such as Syria or Egypt, but not from the eastern provinces of the Caliphate such as Khurāsān and Transoxania, where landed élite (*dihqān*s) maintained power in their ancestral homes well after the Arab conquest. The *dihqān*s served in the Sasanian and caliphal armies, collected taxes, and provided stability during the régime change by maintaining a localized power base.[43] Since power similarly remained in the hands of the élite in the North, ʿAbbāsid-era sources, at least, give us little reason to believe that Armenia "differed sharply"[44] from the other caliphal provinces.

Construing the North as "different" and "other" feeds into its description as a buffer zone, not fully belonging to either group in power. The implication is that Armenia and Albania were never *really* part of the Caliphate, but an unclaimed zone filled with third-party warriors who existed to separate the warring giants of the medieval Near East. The buffer zone theory also ignores how the frontiers appear in descriptions circulating the Caliphate in the early ʿAbbāsid period. Arabic and Persian histories and geographies pinpoint boundaries, clearly marking the points "beyond which there is no Islam."[45] The borders of the Caliphate, even if blurred or fluid in reality, appear concrete in these texts in three ways. First, as we saw earlier, they are explicitly and consistently defined in geographical treatises. Second, we hear of constant *jihād* on a frontier populated with pious and zealous volunteer *mujāhid*s, even if this endless warfare takes place more on the page than in the field. Finally, the frontiers are built with architectural behemoths: fortified gates to block off inaccessible mountain passes and lines of impregnable fortresses that, at least as the geographers explain them, appear to safeguard the Caliphate.

From the perspective of ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic sources, then, the idea that the North served as a buffer zone between the Caliphate and Byzantium is incongruous. The closest thing to buffer zones in Arabic sources, should we take some liberties with the translation, are the *ʿawāṣim*, or "protectresses,"

[42] Ghazarian 1904, 196; see also Ter-Łewondyan 1966, 199, 1976a, 20.

[43] Haug 2010, 218: note especially how the *dihqān* were once petty gentry, then shifted to be local rulers.

[44] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 19: "one of the Arab provinces differed sharply from the others, namely Armīniya, which included the three Christian lands of Armenia, Iberia, and Alβania."

[45] Abū Dulaf 1955, 35.

between the *thughūr* and the central lands of Islam. These *ʿawāṣim* were the "rear-line" areas intended to support and supply the "front-line" *thughūr*.[46] First, there are no references to *ʿawāṣim* in Armenia or Albania, as these appear instead in Cilicia, Jazīra, and northern Syria. As Qudāma b. Jaʿfar explains, Qālīqalā/Karin was officially part of the Jazarī *thughūr*, but it was too remote to be associated with the *ʿawāṣim*.[47]

Second, in his discussion of the *ʿawāṣim*, M. Bonner noted clearly that these were also a literary construction: "this nomenclature, and the picture which we have of this region, do not derive from administrative history so much as from a series of superimpositions made by medieval writers on geography and related subjects."[48] Hārūn al-Rashīd created the *ʿawāṣim* as separate provinces in 786, possibly as an attempt to dismantle the Umayyad North. This was a bid to consolidate his own power and he may have expected the *ʿawāṣim* to remain the prerogative of the caliph, given that many traditions ascribed to Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid-era jurists identified the *thughūr* as a trust (*fayʾ*) for the Muslim community. According to Ṭabarī, the traditionalists complained that the Umayyads were "imams of tyranny who devoured the *fayʾ* and arrogated it to themselves."[49] By the tenth century, though, the *ʿawāṣim* either disappear from the geographical treatises, or rather appear with another function, namely to define the unity of the "kingdom" (*mamlaka*) of Islam.

The examples of the word *ʿawāṣim* that Bonner identifies as anachronistic in the history of Yaʿqūbī and the geography of Qudāma b. Jaʿfar may be explained as an extension of the late ninth-century concern for the unity of Islam in a period of essentially fragmented political power.[50] The integrity of the Caliphate, even if not associated with the ʿAbbāsid family, was a primary concern in the tenth century. Like the *ʿawāṣim*, the description of the *thughūr* as fortified border zones, filled with *mujāhid*s in pitched battle against the enemy, projects a certain unity on Islam by drawing clear and precise lines between the Caliphate and its neighbors (here: Byzantium and Khazaria). This envisaged unity informs the description of the *thughūr*, but also renders untenable the assumption that the North constituted a buffer zone between the Caliphate and its neighbors because it claims the land as the clear prerogative of one side.

[46] Eger 2015, 19.

[47] Qudāma 1889, 254–5: ثم ثغر قاليقلا فى جهة الشمال عن هذه الثغر زيادة الّا انه كالمنفرد لما بينه وبينها من المسافة البعيدة.

[48] Bonner 1994, 17.

[49] Bonner 1992, 29–30.

[50] Bonner 1994, 22.

How Anūshirwān constructed the conceptual borders of Islam

The *thughūr* are consistently defined as bastions of military might, designed for both defensive and offensive roles in protecting and expanding the Islamic polity. The nature of the *thughūr* is defined differently according to historical exchanges between the Caliphate and its neighbors. Authors writing in both Greek and Arabic, including Eutychius, Theophanes, Agapius of Manbij, Wāqidī, Balādhurī, among others, have described the *thughūr* as barriers, intended to prevent movement of both armies and the general populace between two great powers.[51] There are frequent examples where the historical record does not match up with the description of a militarized frontier in geographical treatises. For instance, we see Łewond's comment that "Mahmet Mahdi [Muḥammad al-Mahdī] … was more noble than his father and better in conduct.… He also allowed merchants to remove border (*marzk'*) gates for their merchandise and to fulfill the needs of those in want."[52]

Borders closed or opened depending on local or regional political circumstances, and their closing provoked complaint.[53] An Armenian text composed soon after the Arab conquest describes the border: "from Karin to the ditch separating the land of the Armenians from the land of the Greeks – 100 miles, from there to Kolonia – 90."[54] The ditch does not exactly suggest a militarized frontier. In fact, the text is a travel itinerary designed specifically for someone crossing into Byzantine territory. The *thughūr* maintained their significance not because they restricted movement of people and goods from one land to its neighbor, but rather because of the ideological distinction between Islam and its neighbors, as well as the merit attached to conducting *jihād*, a symbol at least of the continuing efforts to expand the Caliphate.

[51] Kaegi 1986.

[52] Łewond, ed. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 118r: Եւ յետ այսորիկ յաջորդէ զիշխանութիւն նորա մահմետ մահադի որդի նորա: եւ սա էր ազնուական քան զհայր իւր և լաւագոյն բարուք: էբաց զամենայն տունս գանձուց զոր ախեալ պահէր ամբարիշտն աբդլա[յ], եւ բաշխեաց պարգևս զաւրաց իւրոց: հա մարձակեաց և զդրունս մարզից հանել զվաճառականսն ի վաճառս իւրեանց և լնուլ զպէտս կարաւտելոց: Łewond 1857, 187–8.

[53] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 145: Արդ՝ իբրև տեսին նախարարքն Պարսից զայն ևս բեկումն մեծ, որ եղև զօրացն Պարսից, սկսան քրթմնջել ընդ՝ միմեանս և ասեն … մինչև յե՛րբ պնդեալ, կապեալ կայցեն կիրճք ճանապարհաց՝ յարգելուլ զշահս վաճառաց կողմանց կողմանց.

[54] Greenwood 2008, 144.

Modern studies have insisted on the necessity of construing the *thughūr* as the product of multiple layers of representation. Frontier societies often show more in common with each other than with their own metropolitan societies or hinterlands, as local traditions and resources dictate development. In the context of Islamic history, A. Eger noted that the "imagined frontier [was] composed of religious/political ideologies" and not demonstrable in archeological surveys, but that "frontiers – whether real or imagined – all have historical relevance."[55] While Eger is dealing primarily with physical evidence, Z. Antrim tackles the same issue in literary studies: "whether or not the borders portrayed on maps were 'real' or corresponded to lines on the ground is less important than the way in which they were portrayed or the fact that they were portrayed at all."[56] The existence of both a real and an imagined frontier explains the seeming paradox that the open frontier can act as a barrier. It is the conceptual frontier that is most relevant here, as Byzantine traditions disappear and Sasanian traditions appear in descriptions of the *thughūr* of the North. Here we examine two examples, each of which demonstrates how historical traditions changed over time to build the frontiers in the North.

Forgetting Byzantine Qālīqalā/Karin

According to the ʿAbbāsid-era geographical works, the frontier is quite clearly and specifically defined. The only place consistently labeled as an Armenian *thaghr* against the Greeks is Qālīqalā/Karin, known in Greek as Theodosiopolis and in modern Turkish as Erzurum, from the later Arabic name Arzan al-Rūm, itself a calque on the Armenian Arcn where al-Rūm, or "Roman," serves to differentiate it from the original Arzan/Arcn.[57]

There are comparatively few accounts about Qālīqalā/Karin during the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods in Armenian and Arabic sources, most of which, especially Sebēos and Balādhurī, present the city as a locus of military skirmishes between the Greeks and the Arabs during the conquest and Sufyānid periods (ca. 640s–700). However, from the eighth century on, warfare in the vicinity of the city features only rarely in histories, such as during the Armenian rebellion against the Caliphate in the 770s and

[55] Eger 2008, 419, 2015, 20: "the frontier, both real and imagined, is a framework where processes of interaction and exchange took place between communities."
[56] Antrim 2012, 125.
[57] Ghazarian 1904, 211–12;Laurent & Canard 1980, 87–8, n. 83; Markwart 1930, 41*.

during the Greek offensive in Muʿtaṣim's reign (833–42).[58] It may seem incongruent that the city should be heralded only twice as an actual site of hostility in chronicles, while it is so frequently singled out as a *thaghr* in geographical literature. Its prestige is likely related to its strategic position in close proximity to Byzantium and its status as a pre-Islamic provincial capital[59] rather than as a locus of any extended military campaign against the Greeks in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods. Additionally, we should keep in mind that most of our sources date to the tenth century, so some of our authors could be responding to the Byzantine raids against Qālīqalā/Karin in 895 and its fall to Greek forces in 949. Arabic accounts from the eleventh century describe this as catastrophic for the integrity of the Caliphate.[60]

Still, geographical literature supports the view that the border was quite open, as trade routes linked Byzantium to the Caliphate via Armenia. The bridge between the two was Trebizond. Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal note the significance of Trebizond for trade between Byzantium and the Caliphate: "they have an entry into the land of Byzantium [al-Rūm] known as Aṭarābazunda, which is a city in which the traders from the lands of Islam meet and from which they enter into the land of Byzantium [al-Rūm] in order to trade."[61] H. Manandyan ties the importance of Qālīqalā/Karin to the trade routes emanating from Trebizond, considering the former a main thoroughfare for trade from Byzantium through the Black Sea and into the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate.[62]

Due to the open borders and the city's past as a Byzantine provincial capital, the development of traditions about Qālīqalā/Karin in Arabic historical and geographical texts is particularly interesting. Balādhurī writes about Anūshirwān's relationship with the "kings of the Caucasus" (*mulūk al-Qabq*) and the settlement of Persians in the area, concluding that "Armenia remained in the hands of the Persians until the coming of Islam." After the appearance of Islam (i.e., the revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad, not the arrival of the caliphal armies in the North), the

[58] Ter-Łevondyan 1971, 67. On Byzantine campaigns, see Laurent & Canard 1980, 249–52.

[59] Kaegi 1994, 158–9; Thopdschian 1904a, 56–7.

[60] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 63, 89–91, 109.

[61] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 344: ولهم مدخل الى بلد الروم يعرف باطرابزنده وهي مدينة يجتمع فيها التجّار من بلد الاسلام فيدخلون منها الى بلد الروم للتجارة See also Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 188: ولهم مدخل الى الروم يعرف بطرابزندة يجتمع فيه التجّار فيدخلون بلد الروم للتجارة فما وقع من دبابيج وبزيون وثياب الروم الى تلك النواحى فمن طرابزندة

[62] Manandyan 1965, 132–3.

Persian settlers left and Khazars and Greeks ruled the North like petty kings (*mulūk al-ṭawā'if*), a term that typically disparages the fragmentation of political power. The wife of one of these Greek kings in the province Armeniakos (Arabic: Arminyāqus)[63] was named Qālī. When her husband died, Qālī built and ruled over a city called "the beneficence of Qālī" (*iḥsān* Qālī), known in Arabic as Qālīqalā. Balādhurī thus supplies an etymology for Qālīqalā that is tied to Greek rule and finishes the story by describing how Qālī had effigies of herself built on the city walls.[64]

The toponomastics here are convoluted and contentious. *Qālīqalā* renders the Armenian *Karnoy kʻałakʻn*, literally: the city of Karin. There is at least one other instance where the Arabic *qālā* renders the Armenian *kʻałakʻ*: Markwart reconstructs Qazwīnī's مدور صالا (*madūr ṣālā*) as مدور قالا (*madūr qālā*), assuming that it renders the corrupted Armenian մատուր քաղաք (*matur kʻałakʻ*): "richtig müsste es natürlich مدرن قالا [*madran qālā*] = arm. մատրան քաղաք [*matran kʻałakʻ*], Stadt der Märtyrerkapelle heissen."[65] The problem here lies in identifying the path from Armenian Karnoy *kʻałakʻn* to Arabic *Qālīqalā*.

The typical explanation for *Qālīqalā* supposes a distortion of the Syriac *Qalīnqalā* (ܩܠܝܢܩܠܐ, though ܩܠܢܩܠܐ and ܩܠܣܢܩܠܐ are alternatives).[66] Yet *Karin* is the nominative form instead of the genitive; this should read *Karnoy kʻałakʻn* or less commonly *Karnayin kʻałakʻn*, the city *of* Karin, instead of *Karin kʻałakʻ*, the city Karin. The Georgian, as a point of reference, retains the genitive as *Karnu-kʻalakʻi*.[67] Hübschmann therefore argues that the relationship between the Syriac and the Armenian is uncertain. As for the Arabic *Qālīqalā*, he concludes that the Arabs perverted unfamiliar names, especially if they heard them instead of read them.[68] If *Qālīqalā* came directly from Armenian, the vocalization قالَيْقلا would more accurately render the Armenian genitive. Earlier studies proposed another complicated etymology, namely that the transferal from Armenian *Karnoy kʻałakʻ* to

[63] Kaegi 1968.

[64] Balādhurī 1866, 197: قالوا: وقد كانت امور الروم تستتبّ في بعض الازمنة وصاروا كملوك الطوائف فملك أرمنياقس رجل منهم ثمّ مات فملكتها بعده امرأته وكانت تسمّى قالي فبنت مدينة قاليقلا وسمّتها قاليقاله, ومعنى ذلك احسان قالى قال وصورت على باب من ابوابها واعربت العرب قاليقاله فقالوا قاليقلا.

[65] Markwart 1930, 192.

[66] Ter-Łevondyan 1971, 66. Michael the Syrian has Qaliniqala (ܩܠܝܢܝܩܠܐ); Ghazarian 1904, 211: the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* has Qalinqalā (ܩܠܝܢܩܠܐ), while Bar Hebraeus spells it Qalnqalā (ܩܠܢܩܠܐ).

[67] There is an older Georgian form, *Karaxpola*; see Rapp 2014, 286. Cf: Rost 1897, 145 on the Aramaic כרכא?

[68] Hübschmann 1904, 288, and n. 2.

the Arabic *Qālīqalā* relies on a Middle Persian intermediary, **Kārrēkolā*. Hübschmann dismisses this as "nicht wahrscheinlich."[69]

One of the pivotal points of Balādhurī's account is the statement that *Qālīqalā* means "the beneficence of Qālī" (*iḥsān* Qālī). Accordingly, Ter-Łewondyan suggests that Balādhurī's "beneficence" here could refer to the Greek word for "good" (καλή), transliterated into Arabic as *qālā*: the ruler's name Qālī and *qālā*, "good," combine to make *Qālīqalā*, "the beneficence of Qālī" (*iḥsān* Qālī). Ter-Łevondyan traces the Greek back to a village and church, relying on an Armenian text extant today only in Greek translation from ca. 700:

> Au temps de celui-ci [Aršak Aršakuni], l'Arménie fut partagée. C'est alors qu'on construisit Théodosiopolis, qui était auparavant un village, appelé Kalè Arkhè. En effet, quand le grand apôtre Barthélemy se rendit en Parthie, il baptisa dans l'Euphrate le neveu du roi de Perse et trois milles personnes avec lui. Puis il fonda sur place l'église nommée d'après la très Sainte Mère de Dieu et il nomma Kalè Arkhè "Beau Début," le village qui était en ce lieu. Théodose le Grand, ayant considéré l'endroit et l'eau qui s'y trouvait, les jugea agréables et fonda une cité illustre dont il changea le nom en Théodosiopolis.[70]

Balādhurī and subsequent historians writing in Arabic adopt a foundation narrative from the Greeks, then, but forget the details of the baptism or the church and assign a new, profane meaning (the effigy of Qālī) to the engraved image of the Virgin Mary on the walls of the city.[71]

G. Garitte, the editor of this work, does not see a direct link between the Greek name and the Arabic Qālīqalā: "La ressemblance de Καλὴ avec le début du nom arabe de Théodosiopolis *qālīqalā* ne peut être que fortuite,"[72] but he does not then clarify the Arabic explanation that the city name means *iḥsān* Qālī. While jumping from the Greek "good" to the Arabic "beneficence" is admittedly a shaky move, the root ḥ-s-n in Arabic does indeed mean "good" (though, usually, "handsome" or "pretty"). Further, Ter-Łevondyan's theory

[69] Hübschmann 1904, 288, and n. 2. Hübschmann identifies the author of the earlier study as Andreas, but the journal in fact lists the comments as follows: Rost 1897, 144–6. The question about the correct vocalization is noted on 146.

[70] *Narratio* 1995, 430. See Bart'ikyan for Armenian translation, qtd. in Ter-Łevondyan 1971, 63. See *Narratio*, 1952, 27, lines 4–9.

[71] Ter-Łevondyan 1971, 66.

[72] *Narratio* 1952, 67: "Le nom du village primitif, Καλὴ Ἀρχή, n'est attesté, que nous sachions, nulle part ailleurs que dans notre texte inédit, et nous ne devinons pas à quoi il a pu correspondre en arménien…les correspondants arméniens de καλός et d'ἀρχή ne semblent pas usités dans ce qui est connu de la toponymie arménienne…Il n'est pas probable que les mots Καλὴ Ἀρχή proviennent d'une traduction fautive de l'arménien, car ils cadrent bien avec le contexte."

ties the toponomastics to the process of divorcing meaning from Byzantine toponyms. With this, at least, we can help bolster his argument a bit more.

Many subsequent geographical and historical texts in Arabic, such as the works of Ibn al-Faqīh, Yāqūt, Ibn al-Athīr, and Qazwīnī, repeat Balādhurī's report. However, there are noticeable changes. First, later accounts insert Anūshirwān: "Armenia remained in the hands of the Persians *from the days of Anūshirwān* until the coming of Islām."[73] From the tenth-century geography of Ibn al-Faqīh on, Greek petty kings (*mulūk al-ṭawā'if*) disappear from the story entirely. Subsequently, Balādhurī's statement that "then a man from among them [the Greek petty kings] ruled Arminyāqus (فملك أرمنياقس رجل منهم) becomes Yāqūt's "Qus, an Armenian man, ruled over Armenia" (ملك أرمينية قُس وهو رجل من أهل أرمينية):

Qus, an Armenian man, ruled over Armenia. He consolidated his rule and then died. There ruled after him a woman whose name was Qālī. She built a city and named it Qālī Qālah, which means the beneficence of Qālī. And she drew her own portrait on one of the gates of the city. The Arabs [A]rabized Qālī Qālah and so they say Qālīqalā.[74]

The story has changed considerably: the Byzantine provincial name Armeniakos is corrupted, the Greeks are entirely absent from all of the accounts later than the ninth century, the Persians maintain direct control over the area from the days of Anūshirwān to the Islamic incursions, the Persian settlers do not leave, and the king ruling over Armenia is now Armenian instead of Greek.

While we cannot easily confirm Ter-Łevondyan's specific suggestion that the Arabic Qālīqalā is a distortion of the Greek Kalè Arxè, it fits with the later development of the tradition as it shifted farther from the Byzantine milieu. The Arabic foundation narrative for Qālīqalā/Karin thus demonstrates the process of forgetting the Byzantine history of the province. We might easily explain the corruption of the Greek toponym Arminyāqus into Armenia and Qus as the product of a later copyist's confusion with a foreign term, but the complete omission of the Greeks and the explicit reference to continuity between Anūshirwān and Islam are more telling. Either later historians did not preserve the story of Qālīqalā/

[73] Yāqūt 1995, IV 299: ولم تزل أرمينية في أيدي الفرس منذ أيام أنوشروان حتى جاء الإسلام

[74] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 292: وقاليقلا امرأة بنت مدينة قاليقلا فنُسبت اليها ومعنى ذلك احسان قالى :See also Qazwīnī 1960, 551: قاليقلا مدينة بأرمينية تنسب إلى امرأة اسمها قالي, فكأنّه قال قالي بَنَتْ, كما يقال دارابجرد, ملك أرمينية قُس, وهو رجل من أهل أرمينية, وصَوّرَتْ صورة نفسها على باب المدينة. And Yāqūt 1995, IV 299: فاختمع له ملكهم ثم مات فملكّتهم بعده امرأة وكانت تسمى قالي فبنت مدينة وسمتها قالي قاله ومعناه إحسان قالي وصوّرت نفسها على باب من أبوابها فعرّبت العرب قالي قاله فقالوا قاليقلا.

Karin faithfully or, more likely, they rewrote it to obscure the history of Greek rule in the Islamic period. We should not consider the transmission of this tradition as an issue with the reliability of the later sources, but rather we should listen here to the voices of the transmitters through the process of editing.

Remembering Sasanian Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband

Another commonly referenced frontier in the North is the famous wall at Darband, which Arabic geographical treatises place in Albania. In Arabic the city is known as Bāb al-Abwāb, "the gate of gates," or al-Bāb wa-l-Abwāb, "the gate and the gates." The Persian Darband, "barred gate," appears regularly in both Arabic and Armenian sources. The earliest reference to the city as Darband occurs in Širakacʿi's seventh-century Armenian *Geography*,[75] though its appearance in Arabic texts is comparatively late. Armenian texts refer to the nearby pass as Čor, Čoł, or more commonly in the frozen genitive as Čoray or Čołay,[76] which appears in Arabic as الصول via the Greek Τζούρ.[77]

Ibn al-Faqīh describes the northern frontier as a line of fortifications extending from Bāb al-Abwāb to Bāb al-Lān, clearly meant as a substantial barrier to movement.[78] Still, similar to the situation along the Byzantine front, we see that the status of the border depended greatly on the policy of individual rulers and the political and military circumstances at any given time. So, for example, the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* mentions that Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik attempted to create a barrier between the Khazars and the Islamic world, but to no avail:

After he [Maslama] had rebuilt it [Bāb al-Abwāb][79] he made a treaty under an oath by God with the Turks that no one of them should cross over the boundary of his

[75] Kettenhofen, "Darband," *EIr*.

[76] Kettenhofen, "Darband," EIr.

[77] Minorsky, commenting on Munajjim-Bāshī 1958, 30 n. 2, explains that "Ṣūl, in Armenian Chʿor, in Greek Τζούρ, is but another name of Bāb al-Abwāb (Darband)"; see also Dunlop 1967, 19, n. 77. Yet the passage he is glossing differentiates the two: قلعة الباب مع قلعة الصول. The identification of Darband with Čor cannot stand, since Arabic sources make a clear distinction between the two. See Khalīfa 1995, 196; Thaʿālibī 1900, 611. Helpfully, Dasxurancʿi 1983, 239 explains: the bishop Israyēl and his traveling companions հասանէին ի դուռն Ջորայ, որ է մերձ ի Դարբանդ:

[78] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 288.

[79] *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* 1999, 159, n. 1 equates ܬܪܥܐ ܕܟܣܦܝܐ ܠܩܘܪܝܐ, αἱ Κάσπιαι πύλαι, and باب اللان and translates them all as "Caspian (or Iberian) Gates … in reference to the passes of Derbend on the Caspian Sea." This seems to be confusing باب الابواب with باب اللان. See

neighbor, and then he left. But the Turks, not knowing God nor understanding that they were his creatures, nor realizing that there was a God in Heaven, did not abide by his treaty, but despised God and rejected his word. Scornfully, they crossed over and committed numerous evils in the whole land extending beyond their boundaries.[80]

Despite the extensive defenses, Arabic, Armenian, and Syriac sources detail frequent threats to the Caliphate from the Turks and Khazars, as well as the subsequent campaigns, such as those of Muḥammad b. Marwān, Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Jarrāḥ b. ʿAbd Allāh l-Ḥakamī, and Marwān b. Muḥammad. Anūshirwān's walls, a symbol of the impregnability of the Sasanian Empire, were in fact ephemeral.

We also have considerable evidence of trade across the border, linking the Caliphate to Eastern Europe: from the central lands of the Caliphate to the Volga, then on to either the Baltic region or further west; from Iran northward via Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband; and from southeastern Iran heading north via Jazīra and Armenia.[81] There are multiple examples of Khazars living in the Islamic world and, vice versa, Muslims in Khazaria.[82] Again, we have a frontier that was open, allowing economic and political exchanges, this time between the Caliphate and Khazaria. Like the Byzantine frontier, then, the Khazar frontier was reinforced with ideas even more than with arms.

In his study of ʿAbbāsid memory of Umayyad leaders, A. Borrut argues that the Arabic accounts of Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik's refortification of the walls at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband intend to draw a direct comparison between the Marwānid hero and Alexander.[83] Arabic sources place the wall of Gog and Magog past the land of the Khazars and some accounts even claim that the Khazars were Gog and Magog.[84] This does not necessarily suggest that scholars and scribes writing in Arabic confused Alexander and Anūshirwān's walls, but rather that this constitutes a "multilayered narrative" such that the stories about Sasanian building programs tap into a larger body of stories familiar to the medieval audience. As such,

Czeglédy 1960, 83, for a discussion on the use of Κάσπιαι πύλαι to mean Darband. See also Toumanoff 1961, 33, n. 148: καὶ πυλῶν Κασπίων καὶ μερῶν Ἀλανῶν.

[80] *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* 1999, 159. See also *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* 1895, 25.

[81] Mušełyan 1979, 151–2; Noonan 1984, 151–2 and 158–9.

[82] Dunlop 1967; Golden 2002, 2004; Wasserstein 2007, 376–7.

[83] Borrut 2011, 268–9.

[84] That Gog and Magog are past the Khazars, see Ott, Schmidt, & Van Donzel 2010, 81–2; Zadeh 2011, 174–5. On the relationship between the Khazars and Gog and Magog, see Ibn Faḍlān 2014, 258–9; Yāqūt 1995, II 369. See also Daryaee 2003 for a comparison of Alexander and Anūshirwān.

in rebuilding Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband Maslama became not just the new Alexander, but also the new Anūshirwān. Here ʿAbbāsid-era texts stake a Marwānid claim to a Sasanian legacy. The walls of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband typically appear in Arabic sources as evidence of Sasanian might. Through Maslama's involvement in the North and his rebuilding of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, Marwānid heroes simultaneously coopt Sasanian legacy and make implicit claims of continuity. Ps. Callisthenes and the Alexander traditions are excellent examples of the significance of intercultural transmission in the sectarian milieu of the Near East, Sasanian legacy, and Qurʾānic or biblically inspired geography in Arabic descriptions of the North,[85] and unpacking their significance is too large of a task for our purposes here.

Apart from Alexander, the ʿAbbāsid-era foundation narratives of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband center on the accounts of four marriages. According to the contemporary Greek historian Priscus, Pērōz the son of Yazdegerd organized a marriage between his sister and the king of the Huns in the fifth century. In an attempt to hoodwink the Huns, he sent another woman to play the part of his sister, though she revealed the plot to her future husband.[86] This is the same Pērōz who appears in Ṭabarī's history in relation to the building of the fortifications near Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband: "King Fayrūz had previously erected in the regions of the Ṣūl and Lān buildings of stone, with the intention of strengthening his lands against the encroachments there of those nations."[87]

The story of Pērōz informed the tradition of Anūshirwān's ill-fated marriage negotiations with the Khazars. Ibn Khurradādhbih and Balādhurī both relate a story that links Anūshirwān's walls to his proposed marriage to the daughter of a *khāqān*. Here the Sasanian monarch built the towns along the frontier and filled them with Persians (Siyāsījiyya).[88] He feared the hostility of the Khazars and sent a letter to their king, suggesting that the *khāqān* send his daughter to him in marriage. Although Anūshirwān promised his own daughter's hand in return, he sent instead another woman to imitate a princess. He then embarked on a scheme to distract the *khāqān* and to trick him into agreeing that the soldiers would not accept the marriages. The *khāqān* allowed Anūshirwān to build a wall between the two realms to prevent their soldiers from fighting

[85] Ott, Schmidt, & Van Donzel 2010; Zadeh, 2011.

[86] Dunlop 1967, 19.

[87] Ṭabarī 1999, 152; Ṭabarī 1893, I 895: وكان الملك فيروز بنى فى ناحية صول والآن بناءً بصخر اراده ان يحصّن بلاده عن تناول تلك الامم.

[88] On the Siyāsījiyya, see Chapter 5.

to express their unhappiness with the unions. Once the wall was built, Anūshirwān's treachery was unveiled and the *khāqān* learned that his wife was not a princess at all, but he could not act on this knowledge because the wall protected the Sasanian Empire from his anger and retribution.[89] As Balādhurī puts it, "someone told the *khāqān* afterwards: 'he deceived you, married you to someone other than his daughter, and fortified [his empire] against you.' And so he was not as capable in stratagems."[90]

The story of Anūshirwān's marriage arrangement with the *khāqān* rewrites an earlier Sasanian-era tradition, but appears only in the ninth century and should therefore be understood in light of ʿAbbāsid-era relations with the Khazars. Moving into the ʿAbbāsid period, then, we meet a third doomed arranged marriage aimed at containing the Khazar threat, though the details are substantially different. Balādhurī and Ṭabarī note the marriage of the daughter of a *khāqān* and the Arab governor of Armenia, Yazīd b. Usayd [or Asīd] b. Ẓāfir al-Sulamī, and the subsequent death of the bride in childbirth.[91] The story is filled out even more in Ibn Aʿtham's ninth-century *Book of Conquests*.[92] Manṣūr ordered the marriage with the goal of maintaining the borders: "the land of Armenia will not be in order or at peace except with a marriage arrangement with the Khazars … I fear for you and for all of your officials because of the Khazars. For indeed if they desire and if they gather, they conquer. And so pay attention and do not disobey my order and work towards a marriage agreement with the Khazars."[93] Ibn Aʿtham lists the dowry and retinue of the *khāṭūn* in detail, and explains her conversion to Islam after learning the Qurʾan from the women in Bardhʿa/Partaw.[94]

This marriage appears in Łewond's history, as well, a source noticeably earlier than the Arabic accounts. In this rendition, Yazīd b. Usayd approaches the *xakʿan* (defined as *arkʿayn hiwsisoy*, or "the king of the

[89] Balādhurī 1866, 195–6, though this version describes the relationship between Anūshirwān and "the Turks"; Qudāma 1889, 259–61; Qazwīnī 1960, 507.

[90] Balādhurī 1866, 196: فقيل لخاقان بعد ذلك انّه خدعك وزوّجك غير ابنته وتحصّن منك فلم يقدر على حيلة

[91] Balādhurī 1866, 210: فكتب اليه المنصور يامره بمصاهرة ملك الخزر ففعل وولدت له ابنته منه ابناً فمات وماتت في نفاسها

[92] On the ninth-century date for Ibn Aʿtham, see Conrad 2015. If he did indeed write his *futūḥ* in the early ninth century, then he predates the other Arabic accounts of Yazīd's marriage. Łewond's account, from the late eighth century, is still the earliest account of this event.

[93] Ibn Aʿtham 1975, VIII 229: وكتب □ليه المنصور: أما بعد فان بلاد □رمينية لا تستقيم ولا تصلح □لا بمصاهرة الخزر, والراي عندي ان تصاهر القوم حتى تستقيم البلاد, وإلا فاني خائف عليك وعلى جميع عمالك من الخزر, فانهم إذا أرادوا واجتمعوا غلبوا, فانظر ولا تخالف أمري واجتهد في مصاهرة الخزر. See also Czeglédy 1960, 79 and Noonan 1984.

[94] Czeglédy 1960, 79.

North") to secure peace between the Arabs and Khazars and marries the *xatʿun*. Łewond similarly tells of her retinue and her death in childbirth. Then, significantly, he continues: "the peace treaty between them was cancelled, for they [the Khazars] considered her death as a deceitful plot."[95] Łewond's version thus presents the death of Yazīd b. Usayd's wife as the *casus belli* for the Khazar raids into caliphal territory in 762.

The Arabic traditions do not make explicit connection between the death of Yazīd b. Usayd's bride and the subsequent incursions. They do, however, blame the Khazar raids on a Muslim–Khazar marriage and the death of a Khazar bride. A fourth arranged marriage was attempted between Faḍl b. Yaḥyā l-Barmakī and the daughter of a *khāqān*.[96] Ṭabarī and Azdī report that

> In this year [798/9], the daughter of the Khāqān, ruler of the Khazars, was brought to al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, but she died at Bardhaʿah, Saʿīd b. Salm b. Qutaybah al-Bāhilī being governor of Armenia at that time. The Khazar nobles (*al-ṭarākhina*) who had been accompanying her went back to her father and told him that his daughter had been slain by treachery. He accordingly grew enraged on account of this, and began making preparations for war against the Muslims.[97]

The choice of Faḍl, a Khurāsānī bureaucrat from the powerful Barmakī family in the service of the ʿAbbāsids, is not fortuitous. One of Faḍl's claims to greatness was that he built the iron gate at Rāsht in Khurāsān, protecting the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate from the Turkic hoards of the eastern steppe.

This leaves us with four ill-fated marriages: two hoodwinked Hun/Khazar grooms with fake Persian princesses and two blameless Arabs (or maybe Khurāsānī, should we identify the groom as Faḍl b. Yaḥyā) with dead brides and tricked Khazar fathers-in-law. In both sets of traditions, the Khazars considered the marriages duplicitous or blameworthy, although our sources do not specify why the Khazars should find the death of the *khāṭūn* in childbirth deceitful. Anūshirwān's marriage

[95] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902 98v: և բարձաւ ուխտ խաղաղութեան որ ի մէջ նոցա. քանզի իբրև դաւով նենգութեամբ համարեցան զմահ նորա;Łewond 1857, 163.

[96] Barthold & Golden, "Khazar," EI²; Dunlop 1967, 179–81; Markwart 1903, 416–17. Czeglédy 1960, 81, n. 22: "The cause of the Khazarian raid under the governorship of Faḍl, as we may safely suppose, was that Faḍl, at the beginning of his governorship, had launched an attack against the territories north of Bāb al-Abwāb (Yaʿqūbī II, p. 516)."

[97] Ṭabarī 1999, XXX 168. See also Azdī 1967, 294: وحملت بنت خاقان الخزر إلى الفضل بن يحيى وكان تزوجها فماتت فى برذعة وسعيد بن سلم بن قتيبة على إرمينية فرجع من كان معها إلى خاقان فزعموا أنها قتلت غيلة فأحزنه ذلك وأخذ فى الأهبة لمحاربة المسلمين.

is dependent on the preexisting traditions about Pērōz and Faḍl b. Yaḥyā l-Barmakī's marriage is dependent on traditions about Yazīd b. Usayd's marriage. But why would historians replace Pērōz with Anūshirwān or switch out Faḍl for Yazīd?

ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic sources have Iranians, whether Sasanian or Barmakī, engage with the Huns/Khazars in specific ways. Anūshirwān built a wall in the north at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband to keep out the northern hoards and deceived the Huns through marriage, while Faḍl b. Yaḥyā built a wall in the east at Rāsht to keep out the Turkic hoards and deceived the Khazars through marriage. The frontier at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, then, is built in the ʿAbbāsid-era texts by manipulating traditions about the Sasanians, with clear ties to Barmakī activity not just in the North, but also elsewhere in the Iranian *oikoumene*.

THE DOMAIN OF THE IRANIANS BECOMES THE KINGDOM OF ISLAM

This chapter demonstrates that traditions about the frontiers link Armenia and Albania to Sasanian emperors such as Anūshirwān, supplying a convenient distance between caliphal territory and Byzantium and providing promising comparison with the description of other caliphal frontiers.

The Role of the Iranian Oikoumene *in Imagining the* Thughūr

The foundation narratives of both Qālīqalā/Karin and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband construct a conceptual frontier between the Caliphate and its neighbors by manipulating stories relevant to Sasanian rulers, especially Anūshirwān. If we found our study on the assumption that the frontiers are, at least in part, a literary invention, we can then move forward with the study of the northern frontiers in comparison with the others. After all, if many of the ʿAbbāsid-era authors describing the frontiers sat in Baghdad or farther afield, it is reasonable to assume that they took cues in the description of one frontier to the next.

We saw that Balādhurī refers to *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* in the North and others call Armenia a Roman *ṭāʾifa*,[98] so of the most-studied Islamic frontiers

[98] Samʿānī 1962, I 172 and Ibn al-Athīr 1971, I 34 label *bilād al-Arman* as *ṭāʾifa min al-Rūm*.

perhaps the most obvious point of comparison is Spain, which similarly presents a Christian-majority province under the rule of Muslim élite. There are snippets of information that tease at the relationship between the two frontiers, but nothing that could suggest an overt relationship. For example, Abū ʿAlī Ismāʿīl b. Qāsim b. ʿAydhūn, a celebrated Kurdish Muslim born in Malāzkert in 901 who went by the *nisba* Qālī, thereby claiming connection to the city Qālīqalā/Karin, traveled the Islamic world in search of knowledge (*fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*) before dying in Cordova in 966.[99] Further, the appearance of the correspondence between ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and Leo the Isaurian in both Armenian and Aljamiado is curious, even though the path between the two must have been circuitous: Łewond's eighth-century text was translated from Greek, but is clearly related to the ninth-century Syrian Arabic version, which was itself the basis of the late Aljamiado manuscripts.[100] It is tempting to read common interests into the preservation of this polemic in both Armenian and Aljamiado, but we lack sufficient data about the circumstances of the text's transmission and its reception in either province to make much more than a passing statement of curiosity.

The common ground between the two Iberias does not tend to be particularly useful in defining the frontier as described in Arabic geographical treatises. Both provinces were Umayyad, but our discussion of the northern *thughūr* reveals little interest in dynastic affiliation with the exception of the building practices associated with the Sasanians. Both provinces have a mix of Muslim and Christian populations, but so do Syria, Jazīra, and Egypt.

We might discuss ethnic particularism (*shuʿūbiyya*) in both Spain and Iran, but S. Savant has recently called attention to the problematic assumptions about the term *shuʿūbī* in the early ʿAbbāsid period. Used as an insult in tracts to disparage *shuʿūbiyya* instead of self-proclaimed, there is little evidence for a cohesive *shuʿūbī* doctrine or movement.[101] And if it is difficult to locate self-proclaimed *shuʿūbī*s in Iran, it is impossible to find them in the North. Since *shuʿūbiyya* as it is traditionally defined is in essence a deliberation about the relationship between Arabs and Islam, the negotiation of ethnic diversity outside of the Islamic setting is not at all comparable. The ethnic element is further complicated in that the Arabization

[99] Touati 2010, 201; Vacca 2015.

[100] Cardaillac 1972; Gaudel 1984; Gero 1973; Hoyland 1994, 2007, 490–501; Jeffery 1944; Palombo 2015; Roggema 2009, 375–6 and 381–5; Sourdel 1966; Swanson 2009, 377–80.

[101] Savant 2016.

visible in Spain is not paralleled in the North. As P. Crone and M. Cook once claimed that "there is no such thing as a Mozarab Persia,"[102] so too was there no such thing as a *mozarab* Armenia or Albania. Our knowledge about the prevalence of Arabic in the North is sketchy, but there is at least as much evidence to suggest that the common language between the Christian and Muslim populations in the North was in fact Persian.[103]

If we follow P. Crone and M. Cook further down this line of reasoning: "There was no move among native Muslims to retore [*sic*] a Roman empire or a Gothic kingship.... Romance, for all its persistence as a vernacular, never became on [*sic*] Islamic literary language in the manner of Persian."[104] Armenia, Georgia, and Albania *did*, however, do these things: the Bagratuni and Arcruni kingdoms in the tenth century looked to Sasanian motifs to convey a sense of legitimacy, as we will see in Chapter 4. It was not, as Crone and Cook seem to expect, a Muslim endeavor, but rather an Iranian one. Similarly, Armenian (and even Albanian, should we count Dasxuranc'i's *History of the Albanians* as such) literature flourished in the tenth century, and Georgian in the eleventh, in the same way that we see Persian works produced under the eastern dynasties. Although the history of Armenian and Georgian literature reaches back much further than the tenth century, this period saw the production of significant works in Armenian history, such as Drasxanakertc'i's *History of the Armenians*, T'ovma Arcruni's *History of the Arcruni House*, and Uxtanēs's *History of the Armenians*. The eleventh century saw Juansher Juansheriani and Leonti Mroveli, traditionally seen as the authors of our main works of Georgian history. While their authorship has since been brought into debate, their significance in the preservation of Georgian sources has not.

Furthermore, the usefulness of the Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian sources in this study stems not only from the date of their composition, but from the fact that they provide us with a counterpoint to the ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic traditions; in this, they are comparable to what some scholars have even called the "linguistic *shuʿūbiyya*" of Persian historical writing under the Sāmānids in the tenth century. The Persian sources provide us with some sources that are unenthusiastic about ʿAbbāsid

[102] Crone & Cook 1977, 115.

[103] For a meticulous account of all evidence of Arabic in Armenian accounts through the tenth century, see Thomson 2014; On Persian as a common tongue, see Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 348–9; Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 191; Muqaddasī 1906, 378; Nāṣir-i Khusraw 2001, 8; Vacca 2015. Note also: Arabs used Persian as a *lingua franca* in the East as well: Frye 2004, 287.

[104] Crone & Cook 1977, 115.

sovereignty and, accordingly, an alternative perspective to the Khurāsānī frontier.[105] So while Crone and Cook look in vain for an "Islamic literary language" produced in Spain to compare to Persian, we might instead proffer Armenian and Georgian as comparable Iranian literary languages.

One step further, Crone and Cook mention the "receptivity towards the heretical, ethnically less constraining forms of Islam" found in Persia, but not in Spain.[106] Again, as Crone has demonstrated in her more recent study on Iranian religious movements, particularly the Khurrāmiyya, this is a facet of a broader Iranian trend instead of a strictly Persian perspective of Islam and can therefore be found in both the North and the East.[107] We end the comparison with a clear sense that the Spanish frontier cannot compare facilely to the North, but the East seems a much more promising comparison. Again, as Crone and Cook claim, "[W]here the Iranian Muslims fought to retain their culture in Islam, thus creating a distinctive Irano-Muslim culture, the Spanish Christians were happy to extract the culture from Islam, thus creating a distinctive Hispano-Christian culture."[108] Where Crone and Cook see Islam as a pivotal aspect of Iranian identity, it is tempting to amend this to read "the Iranian Muslims and Christians fought to retain their culture from Islam, thus creating a distinctive Iranian culture."

Leaving the West aside, then, we return to the description of the northern *thughūr* built with traditions about the Sasanians. Anūshirwān's wall at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband is the most famous example, but various *shāhanshāh*s built cities to defend the North. This makes the comparison with Spain seem superficial in lieu of the other *thughūr* in Iran. If the frontier is a literary construct built at least in part on the traditions of the Persians (*akhbār al-fars*)[109] and on the legacy of the Sasanian frontier, it is far more fruitful to open the discussion of caliphal frontiers to other provinces of the Iranian *oikoumene,* such as Khurāsān instead of Spain. As such, we turn instead to Khurāsān's *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*, more commonly referred to in Persian as *mulūk-i aṭrāf*, which appears in Arabic sources to refer to Parthian rulers.[110]

We have considerable evidence for a relationship between Khurāsān and the North. Muqaddasī, for example, claims that people in Armenia,

[105] Richter-Bernburg 1974.
[106] Crone & Cook 1977, 115.
[107] Crone 2012.
[108] Crone & Cook 1977, 116.
[109] Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 289.
[110] Luce 2009, 263–317; Morony & Wasserstein, "*Mulūk al-ṭawā'if*," EI².

Azerbaijan, and Albania speak Persian that sounds Khurāsānī.[111] We know that *mujāhid*s from the East came to defend the North and later Arabic prosopography demonstrates that Muslims from the North also traveled to the East.[112] In fact, there were numerous Khurāsānī governors of Armenia and Albania in the early ʿAbbasid period and both Armenian and Arabic sources attest the presence of the Khurāsāniyya in the North.[113] For example, Łewond writes about 30,000 Khurāsānī troops in Armenia when Ḥasan b. Qaḥtaba served as governor of the North[114] and Yaʿqūbī noted the presence of Khurāsānī troops in his time.[115] Further, the focus on *jihād* is maintained in the East as in the North, with the presumption that building activities will solidify or establish Islamic sovereignty in concrete terms. This is common ground for all frontiers, but the North and the East share a significant parallel. Both frontiers were framed by the Turkic hoards past the borders of Islamic territory: Tūrān is here analogous to Khazaria and the Turkic tribes of the North.

More importantly, Anūshirwān's walls at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband find an analog with the "Iron Gate," *bāb al-ḥadīd* in Arabic or *dar-i āhanīn* in Persian, of Rāsht as found in the accounts of Yaʿqūbī, Ibn Khurradādhbih, and Ibn al-Faqīh.[116] While Anūshirwān built Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, it was the Barmakī Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, ʿAbbāsid governor of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Jibāl, and Ṭabaristān from 792/3, whose post expanded to include Sijistān and Khurāsān from 793/4,[117] who constructed the *dar-i āhanīn* of Rāsht. Faḍl (a Khurāsānī) replaces Yazīd (half Arab, half Siwni) in the marriage accounts seen earlier, allowing a parallel between Anūshirwān and Faḍl's walls and star-crossed Hun/Khazar marriages. To take this a step further, Arabic sources typically identify the lost location of Alexander's wall against Gog and Magog either just past Armenia or just past Khurāsān: Ṭabarī and Bayḍāwī claim that the wall is "in Armenia, in Azerbaijan or in the most eastern part of the land of the Turks."[118] Clearly, past the safety of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband and Rāsht was the residence of the legendary and the fantastic.

[111] Muqaddasī 1906, 378.
[112] Bonner 1996, 109; Vacca 2015.
[113] Vacca, "Khurāsānī and Transoxanian Ostikans in early ʿAbbāsid Armenia" (forthcoming).
[114] Laurent & Canard 1980, 197; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 21.
[115] Laurent & Canard 1980, 197; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 5.
[116] Haug 2010, 16–19.
[117] Laurent & Canard 1980, 432.
[118] Ott, Schmidt, & Van Donzel 2010, 81.

In short order we will return to the *naxarar*s, or local nobility in Armenia and Albania; here it is noteworthy that Khurāsān's Persian-speaking *dihqān*s, local landowners, held analogous functions as local families in the North and similarly eased the transition from Sasanian to caliphal rule.[119] For our purposes here, the role of the Iranian élite in passing on traditions about the Sasanian foundation of the frontiers is significant. It is clear, though, that the similarity between the North and the East is more significant than shared terminology and similar political/social structure.

Arabic sources build both the northern and eastern frontiers in the Sasanian period, further tying the two provinces to a shared imperial (Persian) past: just as Anūshirwān appears to construct numerous cities in the North, including Nashawā/Naxčawan, Ṣughdabīl/Sagodebeli, and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, so too did he build Marw al-Rūdh in Khurāsān and even Farāgha in Transoxania.[120] As Qudāma b. Jaʿfar reminds us, "the border (*ḥadd*) of the Khazars [extends] from Armenia to Khwarazm, part of Khurāsān."[121] In short, it may be that the similarities between the two frontiers have as much to do with the latent perceptions of the Iranian *oikoumene* across the breadth of the Islamic world, a shared but imagined (Sasanian or Arsacid) past informing a similar present, as with the actual political and military expectations entangled in the process of protecting and expanding the Caliphate.

It is tempting to see the Iranian element draw together Rāsht and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, while maintaining Qālīqalā/Karin as a counterpoint to the frontier in Spain. The mixed Muslim-Christian population and the threat of Christian powers (Byzantine or Spanish) allow for more fertile comparison. Western Armenia was not consistently or entirely under Sasanian control, making it difficult to establish strong reliance on Iranian themes in the description of the Byzantine frontier. However, the reports were not based solely on the reality of Sasanian rule, which was only over half of the province. Instead, the frontier was built based on the memory

[119] Haug 2010, 291–6. The similarity between the *dihqāns* and the *naxarark*ʿ fades by the tenth century, though. Whereas the East saw local Persian dynasties and the eventual decline of the *dihqān*, see Bulliet 1972, 22, some of the *naxarark*ʿ gained power and established their own dynasties; again, though, these families might be comparable to the Sāmānids, who were also descendants of *dihqān*s.

[120] Haug 2010, 317–18, based on Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 30 for Farāgha (فمن سمرقند الى فراغة ثلثة وخمسين فرسخا وكان انوشروان بناها ونقل اليها من كلّ بيت قوماً); Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 319 for Marw al-Rūdh (فبعث اليها كسرى ناسا من اهل السواد فبنوها وسكنوها).

[121] Qudāma 1889, 259: حدّ الخزر من ارمينية الى خوارزم من خراسان

of Sasanian rule and, accordingly, even a Byzantine provincial capital that was usually outside of Sasanian control such as Qālīqalā/Karin could appear as tied to none other than Anūshirwān himself.

Imagined Unity and Iranian Cosmography in Arabic Geographical Texts

This chapter has, in general, focused on describing the frontiers, but we lingered more specifically on the role of Iranian identity in shaping the descriptions of the frontiers. In this, a few recurrent ideas are lurking under the surface, linked to the unity of the Caliphate and the inclusion of the North in both Islam and Iran. Armenia and Albania, with their majority-Christian populations and historically volatile relationships with the Iranian and Arab élite, do not always fit securely into either category. In defining both Islam and Iran, we look to what they are not: *dār al-islām* is not *dār al-ḥarb* and *ērān* is not *anēran*. Are Armenia, Georgia, and Albania part of *ērān*?[122] What about *dār al-islām*? The repetition of the same question in both Sasanian and Islamic contexts, beyond making for a sense of déjà vu, hints at the influence of Iranian cosmography in Arabic geographical texts.

The comparison between *ērān*/*anērān* and *dār al-islām*/*dār al-ḥarb* is admittedly clunky, as there are significant differences between the two schemas. The term *ērān*, which lent us the word *Aryan*, has a clear ethnic component, while *dār al-islām* prioritizes religious difference. However, *anērān* may also be translated as "unworthy," referring accordingly to both an ethnic and religious distinction from *ērān*, Iran.[123] *Dār al-islām* specifically relates to juridical conceptualization of place in relation to particular legal issues, notably *jihād*. Beyond *dār al-islām*, "the abode of Islam," at least originally, there was nothing but *dār al-ḥarb*, "the abode of war." As M. Bonner and G. Hagen note, "Here, as the vocabulary indicates, the two Abodes are in a permanent condition of war. Since the only legitimate sovereign is God, and the only legitimate political system is Islam, the various rulers within the Abode of War have no legitimacy, and their rule is mere oppression and tyranny."[124] The juridical bent is

[122] For an extended discussion of Armenia as part of *ērān* or *anērān*, see Garsoïan 1976, 193–5, n. 17, 1981. On Georgia, see Rapp 2014, 123–4. On Albania, see Gippert et al 2008, x.

[123] Shaked 2008, 106–11.

[124] Bonner & Hagen 2010, 475.

also clear in the distinction between *ērān* and *anērān*, and Sasanian-era texts (including some in Armenian) similarly disparage the legitimacy of non-Iranian rulers.[125] Even the concern about *jihād* finds a rough analog in intermittent expansionist policies of the Sasanians.[126]

Even while allowing for significant differences between *ērān*/*anērān* and *dār al-islām*/*dār al-ḥarb*, especially the role of ethnicity, the broad similarities include a polarized vision of the world expressed in religious terminology despite the presence of minority groups, the expectation of universal rule, and the expansionist policies of both the Sasanian Empire and the Caliphate. The bulk of the information available to us today, though, is not juridical in nature and therefore expresses some of these concepts in a different framework, namely *mamlakat al-islām*, "the kingdom of Islam," and *Ērānšahr*, "the domain of the Iranians." These refer to political more than ethnic or religious distinctions, as both terms suggest an empire with so little interest in the area beyond imperial borders that it does not rate a name.

We cannot jump to any particular conclusions about the nature of the relationship between the *ērān*/*anērān* divide and *dār al-islām*/*dār al-ḥarb* in the Islamic context. Even though the Arabic geographical treatises show the broad familiarity with Iranian cosmography, the juridical terms fit awkwardly with the delineation of space in the geographical context. Still, the depiction of the frontier, so stable in Arabic descriptions, is dependent on the clear divide between the Caliphate and its neighbors and, significantly, Sasanian frontiers inform caliphal frontiers. This is explicit in tenth- and eleventh-century histories, which include Syria and the Arabian peninsula as part of Iran.[127] In an exposition of Iranian perspectives in ʿAbbāsid-era geographies, J. Kramers comments that "[l]'identification d'Irānshahr avec l'empire de l'Islam est une combinaison très heureuse du sentiment national iranien et de la nouvelle conception du grand empire musulman, dont l'unité politique était encore maintenue à cette époque, du moins en théorie."[128]

[125] Girk' T'ł't'oc' 1901, 167; Greenwood 2008, 21; Silverstein & Bernheimer 2012, 6.

[126] *Šahrestānīhā-ī Ērānšahr* 2002, 4; see also Daryaee 2013a, 22: "The Umayyads and the Abbasids were only the realization of a Sasanian imperial dream which was in the making for four centuries."

[127] Peacock 2012, 68–9: "This clearly reflects the concept of Irānshahr as stretching from the Nile to the Oxus we find in Sasanian works, and indeed some other eastern Islamic ones, but also serves to assert implicitly the unity of Iranian and Islamic history." He is referring here to Gardizī, but we can add Maqdisī and Ṭūsī; see Mottahedeh 2012, 155–6.

[128] Kramers 1954, 152.

With this, we circle back yet again to the issue of unity of the Caliphate. It is difficult to find support for the buffer zone theory in Arabic texts because the authors do not swerve from the presumption that the North is caliphal territory. This is evident in the consistent positioning of frontiers as bulwarks between the Caliphate and its neighbors. It also explains why the provinces of the North appear in long passages of geographical and historical texts designed to ruminate on the breadth of the Caliphate or the unity of the *umma*.[129] We can further read the concern for unity into Muqaddasī's statements about how the region "belongs to Islam,"[130] or the anonymous Persian geography's statement that "these places are the most pleasant in *dār-i islām*." If Abū Dulaf thought that Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi was "a town past which there is no Islam," then presumably before it were towns where there was Islam.

The most striking point about the concern for unity in tenth-century historical texts is the absolute lack of unity in the tenth-century Islamic world.[131] With the disintegration of the Caliphate from the ninth century on, it seems reasonable to suggest that the rise of Iranian families across the caliphal North and East lent the promise of stability to a fractured political scene in a tumultuous moment. However, the Iranian intermezzo did not unite the Caliphate. Rather, it shifted power into the hands of the ethnic majority in the North and East, thereby collapsing caliphal power even more with the ascendance of local powers. P. Crone wittily notes that the Khurrāmī revolts were "what one might have called an Iranian civil war if the participants had had a stronger sense of a shared Iranian identity."[132] The key word here, of course, is "shared."

R. Frye claims that the Sāmānids realize a Sasanian ideal of Iranian unity "with the expansion of New Persian as the *lingua franca* of all

[129] See, for example, Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 5, which lists off the direction of prayer in each province of the Caliphate, including Armenia ("as for the direction of prayer of the people of Yemen … their faces are towards the people of Armenia when they pray"), see also Antrim 2012, 99–100; Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 257–8, provides a long list of how each province of the Caliphate, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, will meet its end during the apocalypse ("as for Armenia and Azerbaijan, these two will perish by the hooves of war horses and with lightening and earthquakes"); Yaʿqūbī, qtd. in Lewis 1987, II 72, explains how each province in the Caliphate is inferior to Iraq, including Armenia ("nor [was Iraq] like Armenia, remote, cold and icy, barren, and surrounded by enemies").

[130] Muqaddasī 1906, 373: هو اقليم للاسلام

[131] Antrim 2012, 144: "In a period normally understood as politically and religiously fragmented, texts representing territories of different shapes and scales communicated an overwhelming sense of connectivity and accommodated heterogeneous peoples, pasts, and agendas."

[132] Crone 2012, 76.

Iranians, and the fusing of Persian, Sogdian, Khwarazmian, and other local traditions into a general, synthetic all-Iranian, but Islamic, tradition."[133] This is an appealing argument, but Iran was not linguistically unified any more than it was politically. The literary language of New Persian failed to spread into the Būyid-held western provinces of Iran, let alone into the northern periphery of the Iranian *oikoumene*.

Our sources, at least, rarely use the term *Iran* this early,[134] nor is it in any way clear that being "Iranian" was a recognizable quality. It is hard to believe that the Arcrunis in Armenia, for example, would have seen the Sāmānids in Khurāsān as brethren just because they were both part of the Iranian *oikoumene*. Iran was, as it had always been, diverse. In fact, in 966, the Sāmānids demanded the tax revenues of Rayy from the Būyids in order to outfit their own military campaign since, they declared, the Būyids had not been successful in protecting the Caliphate against the Armenians.[135] Regarding this encounter, Būyid family historian Ibn Miskawayh exclaimed rather excitedly: "There can be no greater emergency than the ambition of the Byzantines and the Armenians to conquer us and gain possession of our frontiers (*thughūr*)."[136]

The tenth-century historians and geographers did not express the theoretical unity of Islam by projecting association and agreement between contemporary local leaders, but by describing caliphal frontiers as a product of Anūshirwān's ambition and by explaining the rule of Iranian leaders with reference to the long-lost and largely imagined unity of an imperial Sasanian past. As the Iranian leaders of the tenth century, both Muslims and Christians, drew on Sasanian expressions of legitimacy, Sasanian legacy became a prominent theme in both Muslim and Christian literature of the tenth century, a topic we turn to in the next chapter. The Sāmānids expressed their legitimacy with Sasanian images specific to the eastern Iranian world, as we see with Manṣūr b. Nūḥ's medallion minted in 968/9.

The Iranian intermezzo was not a pan-Iranian movement, but rather a set of discussions in which regionally-specific concerns were expressed in mutually-comprehensible ways. The Sāmānids also used the Sasanian title

[133] Frye 1965, 98.
[134] Savant 2013b, 233.
[135] Haug 2010, 329–30, based on Ibn al-Athīr.
[136] Ibn Miskawayh, trans. Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 114;Ibn Miskawayh 2001, VI 260: نحتاج إلى مال خراج هذه البلدان كلّها التي فى أيديكم فإنّكم إنّما جبيتموها لبيت مال المسلمين لنائبة إن نابتهم ولا نائبة أعظم من طمع الروم والأرمن فينا واستيلائهم على ثغورنا وضعف المسلمين عن مقاومتهم.

shāhanshāh like the Būyids in Iraq, the Bagratunis in Armenia, and the Bagrationis in Georgia. However, Manṣūr's bust is modeled on eastern Iranian prototypes, hinting at regional differences in how various Iranian groups interpreted the significance of Sasanian legacy and the usefulness of Iranian expressions of legitimacy to contemporary claims to power.[137] Rulers of the North would similarly develop their own regionally specific expressions of Sasanian power during the intermezzo.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter explores the construction of a conceptual frontier between the Caliphate and its neighbors, a border written on the pages of histories if not necessarily perceptible on the ground. Arabic sources refer to borders (*ḥudūd*) and frontiers (*thughūr*), which appear as clearly defined loci of *jihād* serving to delineate the Caliphate from both Byzantium and the Turkish/Khazar populations in the far North. Given the focus on *jihād*, the Arabic descriptions of the frontiers do not fit well with the concept of buffer zones. Instead, these descriptions of the frontiers demonstrate the role of the regions' Iranian identity in constructing the conceptual frontier: Byzantines disappear and Sasanians appear in the foundation narratives of Qālīqalā/Karin and Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. This material brings us into discussion with major historiographical issues, such as role of the Iranian *oikoumene* in defining the frontier and the significance of Iranian cosmography in Arabic geographical texts.

[137] Treadwell 2003, 328–9: "The regal bust on the obverse of the Bukhāran piece is of singular interest, since, unlike its Būyid counterpart, it is plainly not derived from the Sasanian repertoire of imperial portraiture. Instead its inspiration appears to be from an eastern Iranian source"; Treadwell 2012, 6; Peacock 2007, 48.

4

The So-Called Marzbāns and the Northern Freemen

Local Leadership in the North from Sasanian to Caliphal Rule

In his tenth-century *History of the Arcruni House*, T'ovma Arcruni complains about the ʿAbbāsid caliph Mutawakkil. The caliph "began to lift his horns in impiety to roar and butt at the four corners of the earth … for confusion and the spreading of blood were dear to him." He "pour[ed] out the bitterness of his mortal poison" and attacked Armenia "in great folly" and "like a ferocious wild beast."[1] The charges leveled against the caliph here are not necessarily noteworthy in and of themselves, but for the fact that the passage is pulled nearly verbatim from Ełišē's fifth-century description of the Sasanian emperor Yazdegerd. J. Muyldermans argues that this case demonstrates the recycling of specific descriptors in medieval Armenian texts, an enduring "procédé hagiographique" by which Christians responded to persecution of the faith in a uniform way.[2] The comparison between Ełišē's Yazdegerd and T'ovma's Mutawakkil reveals the entrenched nature of the corpus of historical works composed in Armenia. Understanding of Near Eastern texts in general is predicated on the ability of the modern historian to perceive the "multilayered narrative," in this case, earlier histories and personalities that the medieval reader would presumably recognize.[3]

The two passages, so similar despite the lapse of five centuries between the authors, also illustrate the way in which perceptions of power varied little in the transition from the Sasanian Empire to the Caliphate, a trend

[1] Ełišē 1982, 61, 1989, 12 and 14; T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 47, 173, 1985b, 170.
[2] Muyldermans 1926.
[3] El-Hibri 1999. For the same issue in Armenian historiography, see La Porta 2011, 107–8; Thomson 2005, 36; in Georgian, see Toumanoff 1969, 1.

we see in descriptions of local governors and universal monarchs alike. Although substantial changes were introduced over several centuries, as neither the Sasanian nor caliphal administration remained static with set, invariable policies, a few similarities demonstrate a sustained administrative continuity and, much more commonly, the perception of continuity between the two periods. We see this not only in the brief passage discussed in Muyldermans's article, but also in T'ovma's general tendency to turn to Ełišē's depiction of the Sasanian period to color his description of caliphal rule. In his introduction to the *History of the Arcruni House*, R. Thomson notes the potential political message for T'ovma's audience:

> there are many occasions when Thomas depicts his Muslims or contemporary Armenians with imagery taken directly from Ełishē. This occurs too frequently to be coincidental. And since Ełishē was well known to Thomas's readers, the effect is deliberate. The question, however, remains whether Ełishē had merely provided a convenient framework in which to place the attitude of Armenians to their new Muslim overlords; or whether, by reminding his readers of Vardan and the heroic Armenian struggle, Thomas was holding up a model of conduct also relevant to his own day.[4]

Ełišē's *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* chronicles the battles joining Armenians, Georgians, and Albanians against the Sasanian Empire in the fifth century, so it is possible that T'ovma here is suggesting that Armenians should rebel against the Caliphate in a comparable manner. Thomson offers numerous additional examples of passages similar to the description of Yazdegerd and Mutawakkil. These tend to revolve around specific political or military personalities. For example, Bughā l-Kabīr, the Turkish general whom Mutawakkil sent to the North from 851/2 to 855/6, appears in terms comparable to Ełišē's description of the Sasanian-era Mihrnerseh, sent by Yazdegerd against the North in 451.[5]

The relationship between Sasanian and caliphal governance can hardly be refuted. Whether to claim legitimacy as heirs to the great Persian Empire or to fashion a model for their own administration, caliphs and their administrators frequently adopted and adapted the bureaucracy and rhetoric developed in pre-Islamic Sasanian territories.[6] The general inertia

[4] Introduction to T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 46; Thomson 2005, 39 and 40: "What Ełišē and T'ovma have worked out in their descriptions of resistance to the shah, T'ovma applies to his accounts of resistance to the caliph and the emirs of Azerbayjan."

[5] Garsoïan 1994, 127.

[6] Bosworth 1973, 51, 2009, 31; Bulliet 2009, 44; Dennett 1939, 4; Hoyland 2007, 16; Noth, 1994, 86.

of great political systems and the determination of local powers to retain their primacy ensured that, at least at some level, governmental policies were slow to change even in the wake of the Islamic incursions. There is some evidence of continuity in local governance of the North.

That said, to a large extent, the assumption of continuity is problematic. We rely mainly on ʿAbbāsid-era descriptions of the power structure of Armenia and Albania, whether for the Sasanian period or later. Without significant advances in the history of the Umayyad North, it appears that much of the common ground between Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid administration stems instead from the concerns of tenth-century historians and, accordingly, cannot be attributed to sustained continuity.

Here we demonstrate the perception of continuity from Sasanian to caliphal governance by examining the titles, roles, and incumbents of local positions of power, such as the provincial governors, or the Sasanian *marzbān* and caliphal *ostikan*; the local princes, the *išxan Hayocʿ* in Armenia, the *mtʿavar Kʿartʿlisa* in Georgia, and the *Arrānshāh* in Albania; and the nobility, or *naxarar*s and *azat*s in Armenian, *eristʿavi*s and *aznauri*s in Georgian, and *baṭāriqa*, *aḥrār*, or *abnāʾ al-mulūk* in Arabic. While we are primarily interested in the legacy of Sasanian rule (how it was remembered), we may also occasionally identify a few hints of actual Sasanian antecedents to local rule.

FOREIGN GOVERNORS: THE *MARZBĀN* AND THE *OSTIKAN*

The position of *ostikan*, the caliphal governor, has long occupied a premier place in the historiography of the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid North. It has become a somewhat consuming topic, as scholar after scholar attempts to account for every scrap of extant literary and numismatic evidence about the incumbents. Thus today we have numerous lists, each adding some detail to the work of earlier generations: J. H. Petermann's *De Ostikanis Arabicis Armeniae Gubernatoribus* (1840), M. Ghazarian's *Armenien unter der arabischen Herrschaft bis zur Entstehung des Bagratidenreiches* (1904), R. Vasmer's *Chonologie der arabischen Statthalter von Armenien unter den Abbasiden, von as-Saffach bis zur Krönung Aschots I, 750–887* (1931), H. Nalbandyan's "Arabacʿi ostikannerə Hayastanum" (1956), Ter-Łevondyan's "Arminiayi ostikanneri žamanakagrutʿyunə" (1977), Canard's addendum to Laurent's *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam* (1980), and the addendum in A. Vardanyan's *Islamic Coins Struck in Historic Armenia* (2011).

These lists are invaluable reference tools and practical guides to reading sources, but they do little to contextualize the information. It is an enticing project to unravel the inconsistencies in the data provided by texts and coins. Presumably there is a "right answer" that we should be able to uncover with close study of the sources. However, the significance of each individual find is doubtful. It may not matter, for example, when Khuzayma b. Khāzim became governor of Armenia. In some extraordinary cases, the tenure of an individual can determine the dating for specific events, such as Khazar raids. Still, the precise dates of each governor's reign cannot always be particularly useful information, unless they relate to broader historical questions or are utilized to ascertain an expedient methodology by which future scholars could approach the inconsistencies in the extant sources. The lists of *ostikan*s have thus far not sparked interest in this sort of endeavor and can therefore, for our purposes here, be set aside. It is the position of *ostikan* itself, rather than any individual incumbent, that provides a more valuable study.

The Title Ostikan

The word *ostikan* seems etymologically tailor-made to demonstrate continuity from the pre-Islamic period. Modern scholars typically identify *ostikan* as an Armenicized version of the Middle Persian word *ōstīgān*,[7] meaning "faithful, trustworthy; that is, someone who is close to the king."[8] J. Gippert has suggested that the word *ostikan* in fact entered Armenian via the Parthian, while the Georgian *osṭigan* better renders the Middle Persian. He dates the Georgian rendering of the word to the Sasanian period, arguing that *ostikan* had in fact entered Armenian earlier.[9]

The word *ostikan* was used in fifth-century biblical translations to render ἐπίσκοπος or ἐπιστάτης,[10] but Sebēos uses the word to refer to Sasanian officers of Ḵosrow II.[11] Sebēos also uses the term with the implication of governorship, but only for the Sasanian period.[12] This identification of the

[7] P'AWSTOS BUZANDAC'I 1989, 551.

[8] TER-ŁEVONDYAN 1962, 247. This is from HÜBSCHMANN 1908, 216: "the faithful, steadfast, treu, zuverlässig."

[9] GIPPERT 1993, I 188.

[10] GIPPERT 1993, II 217–19.

[11] TER-ŁEVONDYAN 1962, 246;. SEBĒOS 1979, 83 (ոստիկանն փուշտիկանն). For the translation from Greek, see also HÜBSCHMANN 1908, 215.

[12] SEBĒOS 1979, 115: Արդ՝ նախ միաբանեալ հնազանդեցան ի ծառայութիւն, և մատուցին զաւրավարին և իշխանացն պատարագս մեծամեծս, և խնդրեալ ոստիկանս արս հաւատարիմս՝ նստուցին առ իւրեանց առ ի պահպանութիւն

position as a remnant of Sasanian governance is tempting, but ultimately too weak. Most modern authors follow M. Č'amč'ean and define the *ostikan* as the caliphal governor of Armenia.[13] The problem with this identification is not its veracity, but rather the fact that it is anachronistically provided by later historians. Both M. Ghazarian and A. Ter-Łevondyan point out that the word *ostikan* is never used to mean "caliphal governor" in the works of the historians who would be most familiar with the period of caliphal rule, such as Łewond, T'ovma Arcruni, or Dasxuranc'i. It is not until the tenth century, in Drasxanakertc'i's *History of Armenia*, that we see the word used as it is today.[14] The timing, as we will see, is not fortuitous.

In fact, early Armenian historians use several words to refer to the caliphal governor, including the interesting epithet *karcec'eal marzpan*, "the so-called *marzbān*," a clear indication of Armenian perceptions about the similarity between Sasanian and caliphal governors. Armenian sources also use words such as *hramanatar* (commander), *zōrawar* (general), *zōraglux* (commander, lit: head of the forces), *verakac'u* (overseer, governor), *mec hazarapet* (great chiliarch), *išxan* (prince), *marzpan*, and *hawatarim* (trustworthy) to refer to the caliphal governor.[15] Several of these are directly inherited from the Sasanian period and therefore might be used as evidence of some sort of continuity,[16] but these titles cannot substantiate the idea of a deliberate policy to fashion caliphal governance after Sasanian antecedents. After all, the words used for the caliphal governors in Arabic do not echo the Middle Persian: *wālī*, *ʿāmil*, or *amīr*. At most, the continued use of words such as *marzbān* indicates that to the local Armenians there was little difference in the role of the foreign governor.[17]

քաղաքին: Եւ յետ անցանելոյ ամսոց, մինչ միաբանեալ ամենայն ռամիկ կաճառացն մանկունք քաղաքին սպանին զոստիկանս թագաւորին Պարսից և ինքեանք ապստա մբեալք ի բաց կացին ի ծառայութենէ նորա:

[13] Bournoutian 2003, 74; Garsoïan 2004a, 126; Grousset 1984, 308; Mahé 1997a, 64; Redgate 1998, 170; Ter-Łevondyan 1962, 243.

[14] Ghazarian 1904, 194: "Die Statthalter werden von den arabischen Historikern عامل oder والٍ, von den Armenien aber Iškhan (Fürst), Hramanatar (Befehlshaber) Werakazu (Aufseher od. Verwalter) genannt. Der Titel Ostikan kommt erst im 10. Jahrhundert, bei Johan Katholikos vor; den älteren Historikern, Ghevond und Thoma Artsruni, ist er in diesem Sinne nicht bekannt." See also Hübschmann 1908, 215–16; Ter-Łevondyan 1962, 244.

[15] Ghazarian 1904, 194; Ter-Łevondyan 1962, 243–4.

[16] On the titles of provincial governors in the ʿAbbāsid period, see Nicol 1979, 205–8: *ʿāmil* and *amīr* are largely interchangeable, while *wālī* is unusual.

[17] T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 186, no. 2: "As with *hazarapet*, Thomas is using an old term anachronistically – but deliberately – in order to recall his model, Ełishē." This may

The Roles of the So-Called Marzbāns

The onus is on us, then, to ascertain actual and constructed continuity in the comparison of the role of the *marzbān* and the so-called *marzbān* (the *ostikan*). The Sasanian monarch appointed *marzbān*s (Armenian: *marzpan*; Georgian: *marzapani*) over each of the provinces. Christensen sees the position of *marzbān* as an overseer for both the civil and military leaders: "les marzbāns semblaient avoir eu, souvent, un caractère plus militaire que civil, l'administration civile étant en grande partie, sous le régime de la centralisation plus accentuée de la période sassanide, aux mains de fonctionnaires subalternes en ce qui concerne les petits territoires (des *shahrīghs*, des *dēhīghs*)."[18] In general, this is a fair conclusion from the available sources, but it remains to be demonstrated if we can trust these sources.

Persian inscriptions and seals from the Sasanian period do not frequently reference the role of *marzbān*. The only inscription with this word dates from the seventh or eighth century, though its related term for "frontier" (*mrz*) is much more common.[19] Most scholars turn instead to the later Arabic histories for information on the position. According to Masʿūdī, there were four Sasanian *marzbān*s: one for each of the four cardinal directions,[20] conflating the roles of *marzbān* and general (see Chapter 2 re: Middle Persian: *spāhbed*; Arabic: *iṣbahadh*; Armenian: *sparapet*). This military aspect of the marzpanate appears repeatedly, such as in the works of Ełišē, Bar Penkaye, Movsēs Xorenacʿi, Balādhurī, Dīnawarī, Ṭabarī, and Balʿamī, as well as the martyrology of Dawitʿ Duinecʿi.[21] The nature of the frontier, on the edges of imperial territory and set in restive territories, necessitated the military aspect of the office. The administration of quotidian affairs was – for both the Sasanian and the caliphal

suggest not only that Tʿovma was referring to Ełišē, but also that Armenian authors compared Sasanian and caliphal governors. After all, Tʿovma is not the only Armenian author to refer to the caliphal governor as *marzpan* and not everyone mirrors the language choices on Ełišē's example.

[18] Christensen 1936, 133.

[19] Gignoux 1984, 11. On the connection between the frontier and the governor, see Toumanoff 1963, 155–9, on the early Sasanian *vixata* (Middle Persian: *bītāxš*; Armenian: *bdeašx* or *sahmanakal*; Georgian: *pitiaxši*).

[20] Masʿūdī 1965, 104: فاما المرزبان فهو صاحب الثغر لأن المرز هو الثغر بلغتهم وبان القيم وكانت المرازبة اربعة للمشرق والمغرب والشمال والجنوب كل واحد على ربع المملكة

[21] Gignoux 1984, 20–5: "on conçoit bien en effet que des régions-frontières, où les problèmes de sécurité sont primordiaux, soient gouvernées par des militaires"; Ter-Łevondyan 1966, 188 = Ter-Łevondyan 1964, 95.

governor – immaterial in comparison to the protection from Byzantium and the Huns/Khazars and the maintenance of peace within the North.

ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic sources add weight to the military role of the Sasanian *marzbān*. Ṭabarī has Ḵosrow II explain that

> we nominated over the frontier zones Marzbāns and courageous, energetic and tough executive officials. All those whom we appointed we provided with a strong backing of numerous troops, and these officials led vigorous campaigns against the hostile kings and the enemies into the lands facing their own territories. From the thirteenth year of our reign onward, their raids against the enemies, the slaughter they wrought, and the captives they took, [reached to such an extent] that none of those hostile rulers could dare raise his head even in the heart of his own kingdom except under a protective cover, with fearfulness, or under a grant of protection from us, let alone mount a raid into any part of our land or to engage in anything unacceptable to us.[22]

The position of the Sasanian *marzbān* is therefore primarily military, not administrative, and tied intimately to the maintenance of the frontier.

Moving into the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods, we find that the governors were similarly chosen for their military ability to sustain caliphal rule in the North. While Byzantium remains a significant threat, clashes with Byzantium move into Syria, while the Khazars and the Ṣanāriyya posed more significant challenges to caliphal rule in Armenia and Albania. For example, one of the governors of Armenia under Maʾmūn was ʿAbd al-Aʿlā b. Aḥmad al-Sulamī (d. 829), who faced a rebellion in Georgia under Ibn ʿAṭṭāb, who had successfully allied with the Ṣanāriyya. Yaʿqūbī claims that Maʾmūn replaced ʿAbd al-Aʿlā with Khālid b. Yazīd al-Shaybānī because ʿAbd al-Aʿlā "was not knowledgeable about war" and so could not maintain the province.[23]

The Sasanian post (*marzbān*) may have also entailed some fiscal responsibilities, though this is uncertain, given sigillographic and epigraphic evidence for the separate officer in charge of fiscal administration (Armenian: *hamarakar*; Middle Persian: *āmārgar*).[24] Arabic sources

[22] Ṭabarī 1999, V 392–3; Ṭabarī 1893, I 1056: واستعملنا على ثغورنا مرازبة وولاة ذوى صرامة ومضاء وجلد وقوّينا من ولّينا من هؤلاء بالكثيف من الجنود أثخن هؤلاء الولاة ما كان بإزائهم من الملوك المخالفين لنا والعدوّ وبلغ من غاراتهم عليهم وقتلهم من قتلوا، واسرهم من اسروا منهم من سنة ثلاث عشرة من ملكنا ما لم يقدر الرجل من اولئك على إطلاع رأسه في حرم بلاده الّا بخفير او خائفا أو بأمان منّا فضلا عن الاغارة على شيء من بلادنا والتعاطى لشيء مما كرهنا

[23] Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 565: و ولّى عبد الاعلى ابن احمد بن يزيد بن اسيد السلميّ ارمينية فقدّم البلد و قد تغلّب على جرزان محمد بن عتّاب وانضمّت اليه الصناريّة فحاربه فزمه ابن عتّاب ولم يكون له ضبط ولا معرفة بالحرب فولّى المأمون خالد بن يزيد بن مزيد.

[24] Gyselen 2000. The inscriptions found in Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband also mention the *āmārgar*; Gignoux 1991; Christensen 1936, 11 on *Ādhurbadhghān-āmārkār*. Greenwood

occasionally attribute responsibility over the regional treasury and tax collecting to the Sasanian *marzbān*.[25] However, Arabic and Armenian sources refer to a fiscal administrator (Arabic: *ʿāmil* or *ṣāḥib al-kharāj*) under caliphal rule as well, an individual other than the *marzbān*. Similarly, the caliphal governors were placed over military and civil administration (literally, "over war and prayer," or *ʿalā l-ḥarb wa-l-ṣalāt*), while the ʿAbbāsids sent another agent over fiscal administration ("over the land tax," or *ʿalā l-kharāj*).[26] This organization is comparable to other caliphal provinces, including Khurāsān.[27]

Presumably the confusion lies in the governors' responsibilities of overseeing those holding lesser posts in the region entrusted to him and/or the changing rule of the *marzbān* over time and across regions. The governors must have enforced the collection of the taxes, as failure to collect or send revenues on to Ctesiphon or Baghdad constituted rebellion and the governors' primary purpose was to maintain the borders.[28] Łazar P'arpec'i, for example, has Aršawir Kamsarakan, the prince of Sirāj/Širak who had served as *marzbān* over Georgia and the Albanian Gates, brag to Yazdegerd that he controlled the taxes of Armenia, and could therefore send the revenue to the Huns as an act of rebellion against Sasanian power. The *shāhanshāh* responded by stripping him of his position and demanding recompense for the lost funds from his family,[29] but this does demonstrate that the *marzbān*s had control over the treasury of the North. That said, in neither case was the primary role of the Sasanian or caliphal *marzbān* the collection of taxes.

Thaʿālibī's description of the leadership in the Sasanian provinces during the time of Anūshirwān, including Armenia and Azerbaijan explicitly,

2008, 43 argues that the Armenian *hamarakar* renders the Middle Persian *framādār*, "commander," but the Middle Persian and Arabic *framāndār* appears in Armenian as *hramanatar*; see Patkanian 1866, 114.

[25] Gignoux 1984, 19. He supports this with Balādhurī 1866, 315-6: وامر بمحاسبة ماهويه مرزبان اردبيل وهى مدينة اذربيجان وبها مرزبانها واليه جباية خراجها and 317: مرو وساله عن الاموال; and Dīnawarī 1888, 133: ولما رأى يزدجرد ذلك جمع اليه عظمآء مرازبته فقسم عليهم بيوت امواله وخزائنه

[26] Laurent & Canard 1980, 205; Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 516.

[27] On military and fiscal administrators in the East, see Luce 2009, 241. Here the governor *ʿalā l-ḥarb* was an Arab while the governor *ʿalā l-kharāj* was a *mawlā*.

[28] Ghazarian 1904, 194: "Zu dem Wirkungskries des Statthalters von Armenien gehörte: das Land in Gehorsam zu halten, gegen die nördlichen Völker einerseits und die Byzantiner andrerseits, später auch gegen die Rebellen in Adherbeidjān und Arrān Kriege zu führen." Thopdschian 1904a, 53: "Die Hauptaufgaben eines Marzpans waren, die Grenzen gegen die Griechen und kaukasischen Völker zu schützen und die armenischen Satrapen im Zaume zu halten."

[29] Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 198–200.

suggests that the taxation policies and militarization of the border are indicators of the governor's interest in the productivity of the land.

> Cultivation is like life and destruction is like death. A man who kills someone is the same as a man who lays waste to land. If someone is not able to cultivate his estate due to insufficient means, we will set aside what has been allotted for him from the treasury, in order to repair his livelihood.[30]

Flourishing estates, combined with a conscientious interest in social justice, defined Sasanian legitimacy in the provinces: "If your justice makes the province flourish, you can remain there and rejoice in your just rule."[31] The cultivation of the land similarly presented a significant concern to caliphal administrators. Caliphal policy actively discouraged emigration from the North in order to foster cultivation of the land. "The Umayyads and ʿAbbasids had settled them [the Armenians] in their homes [in Armenia] and collected taxes from them based on their tribute."[32]

Yet based on this information alone, it is not possible to determine with any degree of certainty if this similarity between the *marzbān* and the *ostikan* is a result of actual or constructed continuity. Nearly all of the primary and secondary sources cited earlier, including, famously, A. Christensen's pivotal study *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (1936), are dependent on the ʿAbbāsid historical tradition. Our knowledge of Sasanian administration depends heavily on the fact that it was useful for political claims of ʿAbbāsid-era historians. As such, its questionable reliability is not necessarily an impediment here; regardless of what the Sasanians, Umayyads, and ʿAbbāsids did or did not do, ʿAbbāsid-era texts described caliphal rule in a way that is reminiscent of Sasanian administration and/or vice versa. In other words, descriptions of ʿAbbāsid-era administration and claims to power were formulated based on Sasanian legacy, not necessarily on Sasanian antecedents.

Here, at least, Armenian sources can complicate this discussion and further suggest that Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid representatives had similar job descriptions. This concern for the productivity of the land is attested in Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid-era Armenian sources as well. T'ovma Arcruni

[30] Thaʿalibī 1900, II 610: وكان يقول العمارة كالحياة والخراب كالموت وسواء من قتل نفساً او خرّب ارضاً ومن لم يقدر على عمارة ضيعته لقلّة ذات يده اقضناه من بيت المال ما يعينه على رمّ معيشته. On Thaʿālibī and Iranian memory in general, see Savant 2013b, 132–6. Compare this to Firdowsī 2006, 568–9.

[31] Firdowsī 2006, 566; see also 676. This is comparable to passages in Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyāsat-nāma*; see Lewis 1987, I 182: "The sovereign should also concern himself with all that conduces to the prosperity of the world."

[32] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 343: وكانوا بنو أميّة وبنو العبّاس قد أقرّوهم على سكناتهم ويقبضون الرسوم عليهم من جبایاتهم

explains that "[i]t is the duty of kings who govern the world to watch over and care for the prosperity of the country, to lighten the tyrannous yoke of heavy burdens and soften the severity of painful demands for taxes, lest the productive capacity of the country be completely destroyed."[33] Later, he applies this same logic to governors. T'ovma's interests here are not tied solely to the period of Bughā's Caucasian campaigns, as he relies here and throughout his discussion on Ełišē's fifth-century diatribe against the Sasanian emperor Yazdegerd and his vizier Mihrnerseh.[34] There are also comparable comments in Łazar P'arpec'i's fifth-century *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*.[35] In the end, the duties and responsibilities of Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid governors can only remain unresolved, as we cannot establish historical realities with any degree of certainty more than 1,000 years later. More reasonable, though, is the recognition that many authors described ʿAbbāsid governors through an Iranian lens, one that sounds quite familiar to students of Sasanian history.

The Identity of the Sasanian and Caliphal Governors of the North

Although the extent of Sasanian control over the North following the Greek–Persian wars of late antiquity is unclear,[36] Arabic sources suggest that the Persian governors of the North eventually allowed the provinces to pass directly from Sasanian to caliphal control and, in doing so, retained their authority. The best indicator of this continuity is Shahrbarāz, the governor of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband at the time of the Islamic incursions, who distanced himself from the Armenians and Albanians over whom he ruled in order to maintain his own position of power:

I am facing a rabid enemy and different communities who are not of noble descent. It is not fitting for the noble and the intelligent to assist such people or to ask their help against those of noble descent and origins. Noblemen [stick] close

[33] T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 52 and 183–4, 1985b, 184–6: Թագաւորաց աշխարհակալաց օրէնք են՝ մեծաւ հոգաբարձութեամբ խնամ տանել վասն շինութեան աշխարհի և թեթևացուցանել զլուծ բռնութեան ծանրակի բեռանց, թուլացուցանելով զասստկութիւն հարկապահանջ խոշտանգանաց, զի մի սպառ սպուռ տապալիցի զօրութիւն շինուածոյ աշխարհի.

[34] T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 52.

[35] Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 124, has Armenian apostates praise Yazdegerd as follows: Ամենայն թագաւորք որ յառաջ քան զձեզ էին ի գահուդ յայդմ ձեր նախնիքն սիրէին զմեզ հոգալով զմեր շինութիւնս և զօգուտս մարմնաւորս.

[36] Ghodrat-Dijazi 2011.

to noblemen, wherever they are. I am certainly not a Caucasian [*min al-Qabkh*] or an Armenian. You have conquered my land and my community. Now I am one of you; I am completely with you and my inclinations are the same as yours. God bless us and you![37]

Shahrbarāz therefore becomes the personification of continuity, appearing in ʿAbbāsid-era texts as evidence of the connection between Sasanian and caliphal rule. Interestingly, Ṭabarī locates his claim to power and to similitude with the Arabs in his noble qualities. He declared himself, like the conqueror, *dhū l-ḥasab*. The Sasanian and caliphal governors shared similar status.

Responsible for one of the most significant frontiers of the state either before or after the Islamic conquest, the governors were appointed from the royal, or at least noble and well-placed, families in times of particular stress. According to Łazar P'arpec'i, the Armenian *naxarar*s accepted Sasanian rule with the statement "Let a Persian prince come for a while to be our governor."[38] Sasanian rulers offered the role of *marzbān* in the North to élite families, including at least two heirs to the Sasanian throne, Hormozd I and Narseh.[39] As we saw in Chapter 2, Ḵosrow II was appointed over Albania before he became *shāhanshāh*. Concerning a comparable practice in ʿAbbāsid Khurāsān, Bosworth notes that Sasanian antecedents were comparable to caliphal administration: "As under the Sāsānids, the son of the head of state was on two occasions appointed chief of the province, which is explained by the importance of the governorship of Khurāsān, where the struggle with both internal and external enemies presented peculiar difficulties."[40] This is noteworthy given the ʿAbbāsid tendency to appoint either the heir apparent or a close relative to the post of governor over the North. The governors of caliphal Armenia and Albania include future caliphs, such as Manṣūr, Mahdī, Hārūn al-Rashīd, and Amīn, as well as other family members such as ʿUbayd Allāh b. Mahdī,[41] Mūsā b. ʿĪsā l-Hāshimī, and ʿAbbās b. Maʾmūn, to name just a few.

[37] Ṭabarī 1994, XIV 35; Ṭabarī 1893, I 2664: انّى بإزاء عدوّ كلب وأمم مختلفة لا ينسبون الى احساب وليس ينبغى لذي الحسب والعقل ان يعين أمثال هؤلاء ولا يستعين بهم على ذوى الأحساب والاصول وذو الحسب قريب ذى الحسب حيث كان ولست من القبج فى شيء ولا من الأرمن وانكم قد غلبتم على بلادى وأمّتي فانا اليوم منكم ويدى مع ايديكم وصغوى معكم وبارك أَلله لنا ولكم

[38] Garsoïan 2012b, 23: qh՚ իսկ ևս պիտոյ է թագաւոր, այլ իշխան պարսիկ ըստ ժամանակի եկեալ վերակացու լիցի մեզ.

[39] Christensen 1936, 133 and 133, n. 4, for specific examples relevant to Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan; see also Frye 2004, 239–40; Garsoïan 1981, 39.

[40] Barthold 1977, 197–8.

[41] See Vardanyan 2017 for the numismatic and textual evidence of his governorship.

Yet in the North this cannot be explained in terms of continuity from the Sasanian period. Not only must we jump over the conquest and Sufyānid periods, but the members of banū Umayya who served as governors of the North were not heirs: Muḥammad b. Marwān, Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, and even Marwān b. Muḥammad. While the latter did indeed become caliph, presumably no one had foreseen the results of the third *fitna* when he was placed over the North. The Umayyad governors were not placed on a significant frontier to train as future caliphs, but because their loyalty to their family and military expertise ensured effective control over a restive area.

One primary difference between the *marzpanate* and the *ostikanate* is the fact that Armenians were named *marzbān*s under the Sasanians, including Vasak Siwnec'i, Vahan Mamikonean, Vard Mamikonean, Mžež Gnuni, Smbat Bagratuni, and Varaztiroc' Bagratuni.[42] Łazar P'arpec'i preserves the recommendation of the *marzbān* Andekan that the Sasanians promote an Armenian, in this case Vahan Mamikonean, as *marzbān* for two reasons. First, an Armenian would be more in tune with the political vagaries of the North, and would thus be able to navigate potential issues and concerns that might impinge upon Sasanian rule. Second, a Persian *marzbān* would move his entire household, the considerable cost of which would fall on the shoulders of "the lord of the Aryans."[43]

Unlike Sasanian antecedents and the office of commander, which was frequently held by Armenian and Albanian nobles, the governors of the caliphal North were always Muslims and could be Arab, Turkish, Iranian, or even Khazar. The only Armenian governor over the North in the Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid periods was Muslim, ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā l-Armanī. Although Yazīd b. Usayd al-Sulamī was half Siwni, he identified as Arab (hence the *nisba*). At first glance, this seems to imply a level of autonomy allowed to Armenia under the Sasanians that was never actualized under caliphal governance. However, the elevation of an Armenian *marzbān* was not a constant or even common occurrence in the pre-Islamic North, as the Sasanian

[42] There seems to be some disagreement about this. Greenwood 2004, 71: Kavād II's appointment of Varaztiroc' as *marzbān* "broke with the convention … that Armenians should not hold the highest administrative office in their own country." Cf. Garsoïan 1994, 122: "Numerous Armenian princes … served as *marzpans* of their country"; Yuzbashian 1996, 215: "Parmi les gouverneurs (*marzpans*) de la Persarménie nommés par les Sassanides figuraient souvent des représentants de la noblesse locale"; P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 544: For the Arsacid period, "*marzpan* is a term used exclusively for Persian officials, while their Armenian counterparts entrusted with the position of the Armenian borders are identified with the hereditary *bdeašxs* or as *sahmanapahs*."

[43] Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 430.

government sporadically attempted to reassert some modicum of control over the provinces and instigated intermittent but broad policies of centralization. Furthermore, this variance is not as significant as might be assumed, given the position of *išxan Hayoc'*, or prince of Armenia.

THE PRESIDING PRINCES OF THE NORTH

During the period of Islamic incursions, including more than half a century when the provinces of the North persisted as autonomous, if largely fragmented tributary vassals to Byzantium and/or the Caliphate, the local presiding princes ruled the North in the absence of a Sasanian *marzbān*. Moving into the Umayyad period, there is epigraphic evidence for Byzantine attempts to elevate Artawazd Kamsarakan as the prince of Armenia even after the arrival of a caliphal governor and the creation of a caliphal province supposedly controlled directly from Damascus.[44] This demonstrates that caliphal rule in the North was not static and set from the moment of the conquests. Instead, the North was an area of contention and competition in the early Umayyad period.

Studies on the position of prince of Armenia traditionally locate its origins in Byzantine history. The title *išxan Hayoc'*, prince of Armenia (or, prince of the Armenians), was created in the sixth century, apparently to counter the power of the Persian *marzbān* and *sparapet* by presenting a new leader, legitimized by the might of Byzantium. The prince of Armenia held the title of *curopalates*[45] and was referred to as a patrician.[46] Yet C. Toumanoff has pointed out that the institution of presiding prince in fact grew from concerns within the setting of Sasanian rule. Looking at unrest caused by Sasanian attempts at Persianization of the North,

[44] Greenwood 2004, 75.

[45] Ter-Łevondyan 1966, 185 = Ter-Łevondyan 1964, 121; Garsoïan 2004a, 126, 2012a, 54. See Sebēos 1979, 133: Իսկ թագաւորն [Heraclius] առնէ ըստ խնդրոյ իշխանացն զնա [Dawit' Saharuni] իշխան ի վերայ ամենայն աշխարհացն, և տայ նմա պատիւ կիւրապաղատութեանն, և հաստատէ զնա ի ծառայութիւն իւր. See Sebēos 1979, 175: Եւ արար արքայ Կոստանդին զՄամիկոնէից տէր զՀամազասպ՝ կիւրապաղատ, և ետ նմա գահոյս արծաթիս և զիշխանութիւնն աշխարհին Հայոց, և պատիւս այլոց իշխանացն, և գանձս զաւրացն:

[46] See Ter-Łevondyan 1966 = Ter-Łevondyan 1964. See Theophanes 1885, 366; Theophanes 1982, 64 translates πατρίκιος as "prince," but in Armenian there seems to be a distinction between պատրիկ (patrician) and իշխան (prince); see also Theophanes 1982, 44: he translates πατρίκιος as "patrician"; Theophanes 1885, 344: ὁ τῶν Ἀρμενίων πατρίκιος is rendered as "the patrician of the Armenians." See also Michael the Syrian 1924, III 3 and V 516; *Narratio* 1952, 341. Ghazarian 1904, 185. بطريق is used to refer to the *nahapet*, as for example in Balādhurī.

including the infamous Battle of Avarayr, Toumanoff claims that "Out of these struggles was born a new solution, the institution of Presiding Princes, which both Iran and Rome resorted to – an office which combined the functions of the High Constable, the Commander-in-Chief of the days of the monarchy, with those of the imperial viceroy and which was filled by one of the local princes."[47] When Maurice appointed a prince of Armenia in the sixth century, he was not creating a Byzantine practice *ex nihilo*, but rather adapting local traditions to fit the circumstances of Byzantine rule. The presiding princes of the North should be tied inextricably to *both* Byzantine and Sasanian rule in the North.

Išxan Hayocʻ

The *išxan Hayocʻ* was responsible for maintaining peace among the noble houses and between Armenian nobles and Arabs. He was expected to keep the population in line with caliphal rule and to avert revolts. He was also in charge of supplying the caliphal representative with cavalry, which is why the roles of prince of Armenia and general (*sparapet*) were frequently assigned to a single individual. As A. Ter-Łevondyan noted,

> Lors de la domination arabe, l'Arménie n'a pas perdu son autonomie interne et son administration n'a jamais été désorganisée, mais, tout en faisant partie de la province d' "Arminia" du califat, elle a conservé sa personnalité administrative et politique. À cette époque, c'était le prince d'Arménie qui gouvernait l'Arménie et qui, bien que sous l'autorité de l'ostikan d'Arminia, était, en réalité l'administrateur des affaires du pays.[48]

In this way, we cannot compare the lack of Armenian governors under caliphal rule to the autonomy afforded Armenia during the Sasanian period, since the position of *išxan Hayocʻ* effectively preserved the nature of the Armenian administrative structure.

The Armenian title *išxan* comes from the Iranian milieu, but its etymological ties are early and Eastern: *išxan*, like the Arabic *ikhshīd*, is from the Sogdian **aχšāwan*.[49] The term is used loosely, and can refer

[47] Toumanoff 1963, 153.

[48] Ter-Łevondyan 1966, 199–200 = Ter-Łevondyan 1964, 133.

[49] Benveniste 1929, 8: "*Išxan* suppose ir. **xšāna*, qui évoque sogd. *'γš'wm *axšāvan* "roi" qu'on lit plusieurs fois dans la version sogdienne de l'inscription de Kara-Balgassun …, et aussi en sogdien chrétien où il rend βασιλεύς"; Pʻawstos Buzandacʻi 1989, 533. Laurent & Canard 1980, 116, n. 121.

to a number of people, Arab, Armenian, or Greek. Throughout the period of caliphal control over the North, Armenian sources refer to the *išxan Hayoc'*, but it is later replaced with the terms more specific to the Sasanian period. So, for example, the inscription on the seventh-century church of Aruč and Łewond's eighth-century history both name Grigor Mamikonean *išxan Hayoc'*, but the martyrology of Dawit' Duinec'i instead names him *marzpan*.[50] The continued use of Sasanian titles was part of a larger process of de-Byzantizing the land and/or rephrasing titles in a recognizably Iranian milieu. The word *išxan* had long since been native to Armenian, whereas *marzpan* was still noticeably Sasanian. This continues into the later period, as Asołik uses the term *marzpan* to refer to the *išxan Hayoc'* in the eleventh century, long after the collapse of Sasanian power.[51]

While the position of *išxan Hayoc'* went to scions of a number of noble families in Armenia, it became the battlefield where the Mamikonean and Bagratuni families attempted to exert their own primacy. This came to a head when Grigor and Dawit' Mamikonean were exiled to Yemen. After their return, they made a bid to usurp power from the Ašot Bagratuni, who was at the time the *išxan Hayoc'*. As we will review in greater detail in Chapter 5, Ašot Bagratuni brought his complaints and his cavalry to the caliphal governor, Marwān b. Muḥammad, who was in the thick of the third *fitna* in Syria. He could not afford to turn down Bagratuni assistance and so backed Ašot's claim to power, ordering the execution of one of the Mamikonean brothers.[52]

The fate of the Mamikonean house is one of the major political changes during the period of caliphal control over Armenia. When the Mamikoneans organized rebellions against the Caliphate first in 748-9 under Grigor Mamikonean and again in 775 under Artawazd and Mušeł Mamikonean, the Bagratunis typically maintained a pro-caliphal stance. Łewond claims that the *išxan Hayoc'* in 748–9, Ašot Bagratuni, later known as the Blind, did not support the first rebellion, exhorting the *naxarar*s to stand down: "I do not see a thought-out act in your insensibility, but rather a perverse plot and useless words."[53] Yet facing the

[50] Ter-Łevondyan 1966, 188 = Ter-Łevondyan 1964, 124.
[51] Ter-Łevondyan 1969b, 241.
[52] Łewond 1857, 150–2.
[53] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 90r: ոչ տեսանեմ խոհական մտաց զգործ անզգա/յ\ութեանդ. այլ անուղ/ղ\ա խորհուրդ և բանս տարապարտս; cf. Łewond 1857, 153.

clamors of the other *naxarar*s, Ašot at first "involuntarily consented"[54] to the Mamikonean call for a rebellion, and later broke off to unite with the caliphal forces. Interestingly, Łewond even presents the rebellion against caliphal rule in Armenia as an attempt for the Mamikonean family to uproot their *Armenian* rivals (the Bagratunis): Grigor Mamikonean "contrived this fraud in order to dislodge Ašot's authority,"[55] perhaps an indicator that Mamikonean resistance to caliphal rule was inextricable from their struggles for dominance against Bagratuni preeminence. After this rebellion, Ašot earned his epithet, blinded by the supporters of Dawit' Mamikonean in a plot engineered by Grigor.

The Mamikonean family rebelled again a generation later under Artawazd and Mušeł Mamikonean. Łewond includes Bagratuni patricians in his account of those who fell at Baghrawand/Bagrewand in 775 (interestingly, these do not appear in Arabic accounts, which only identify the Mamikoneans and Arcrunis as rebels), but here again he also preserves details that suggest the pro-caliphal stance of the Bagratuni house. Smbat Bagratuni, the son of Ašot the Blind and *sparapet* of Armenia, "was somewhat unwillingly moved" to join the rebellion.[56] The *išxan Hayoc'*, Ašot Bagratuni the son of Sahak (i.e., not Ašot the Blind, who was the son of Vasak), "since he was a thoughtful and sensible man, did not join this act of disadvantageous misery,"[57] instead muttering ominous warnings about the folly of rebellion. His warnings went unheeded, though, because he was considered "a confidante of the Ishmaelites."[58]

The ʿAbbāsids therefore relied on the *išxan Hayoc'*, a position that had existed since the Sasanian period, but effected political change by endowing it on their allies in the North. While the Mamikoneans were

[54] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 90v: իսկ ապա հաւանեալ ակամա/յ\ութեամբ իշխանին աշոտի. առնէր միաբանութիւն ընդ գրիգորի և ընդ այլոց նախարարացն; cf. Łewond 1857, 154.

[55] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 90r: և զայս խորամանգութիւն նիւթէր վասն հանելոյ իշխանութեանն աշոտի; cf. Łewond 1857, 152.

[56] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 106v: Իսկ նա իբրև յակամա կամաց շարժեալ յիւրմէ հաստատուն և յանխոնարհելի խորհրդոցն; Łewond 1857, 174.

[57] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 107r-v: ԻՍԿ աշոտ ի տանէ բագրատունեաց. որդի իշխանին սահակա. զի էր այր խոհակ ան հանճարով. ոչ միաբանեաց ի գործ վնասակար աղիտին; Łewond 1857, 174.

[58] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 110r: իբր մտերիմ զինքն ցուցանել իսմաելացւոցն; cf. Łewond 1857, 178.

one of the highest-ranked families of Sasanian-era Armenia, they were also Hellenophile. The Mamikoneans did not recover from Baghrawand/Bagrewand, while the Bagratuni family, compliant with caliphal rule and ally to caliphal armies, cemented its position of primacy in the North.

Mtʿavar Kʿartʿlisa

Moving further north, the *mtʿavar Kʿartʿlisa*, "Prince of Kʿartʿli," or *eristʿavtʿa-mtʿavari*, "Prince of the *eristʿavis*," ruled over Iberia, or the province of Kʿartʿli in eastern Georgia.[59] The *mtʿavar Kʿartʿlisa* also frequently held Byzantine titles such as *curopalates* or patrician. Caliphal administrators, "poursuivant en cela la politique sassanide,"[60] appointed or approved a single prince to serve as the first among equals, responsible (like the *išxan Hayocʿ*) for the administration of the province under the authority of the caliphal governor. Following the abeyance of the Xosroiani monarchy around the year 580, two Guaramid princes served as *mtʿavar Kʿartʿlisa* in the late Sasanian period. The Guaramids were also a branch, if more cadet, of the Parthian Mihrānid family and, with the conquest and Sufyānid periods, the line reverted back to the main branch of Mihrānids in Georgia, descendants of the Xosroiani kings. The Xosroianis, as evidenced by their name, identified with the Ḵosrows of the Sasanian Empire.

The first Xosroiani king, Mirian III (r. 284–361), claimed to be the eldest son of a Sasanian emperor. For Islamicists, the story of Mirian's claim to the Sasanian throne may well sound like a familiar tale. After the death of his father, Mirian met his younger brother in "Baghdad," obviously intending Ctesiphon in this setting, and declared: "I am the first-born son of my father, and (on me) were conferred as an apanage foreign lands conquered by the sword. There, all my days I have been occupied in fighting the Xazars, often with my own blood have I saved Persia from the Xazars. Therefore, the throne of my father is mine." Mirian's brother, Bartam, dismisses his claim to the throne because Mirian was the son of a handmaiden, while Bartam's mother was royal: she was the daughter of the king of India and a queen of Persia. Bartam, the younger brother, explained to Mirian: "You have heard the testament of my father, and you have seen that with his own hand he placed the crown on my

[59] Toumanoff 1952, 49, n. 18–20, provide alternative titles.
[60] Martin-Hisard 1982, 108.

head." And so the younger brother, the son of a princess and named heir by his father, succeeded to power in place of the older brother, the son of a concubine and protector of Iran from Tūrān, who was offered a frontier province in lieu of an empire.[61]

Given that Mirian's story in the *History of the Kings of K'art'li* was written sometime between 790 and 813,[62] compounded by the fact that we cannot identify Mirian's father or brother with any Sasanian *shāhanshāh*s on record, we might wonder at the common ground between this story and the contemporary events occupying Baghdad. Although Amīn had been governor over the North before the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the North fell squarely on the side of Maʾmūn during the fourth *fitna*. Perhaps Mirian's story served not only to provide Sasanian legitimacy to the Xosroiani line in pre-Islamic K'art'li, but also simultaneously intended to strengthen the bonds between pre-Bagrationi K'art'velian élite, i.e., the Parthian Mihrānids as later generations imagined them, and Maʾmūn as counter-caliph. Only while Maʾmūn fought the Turks and retained his power base in the East, Mirian fought the Khazars and retained his power base in the North. If Mirian's story was indeed inspired by the fourth *fitna*, we might place the *terminus post quem* for the *History of the Kings of K'art'li* in March 809 with the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd, while the *terminus ante quem* would be Amīn's death in September 813, since Mirian's troops do not kill Bartam to make Mirian *shāhanshāh*.

Scions of the Xosroiani family, descendants of this Mirian, claimed the title *mt'avar K'art'lisa* only during the Sufyānid period. The Guaramids, who had held the position in the conquest period, return to power under the Marwānids, then the Nersianids held the position under the ʿAbbāsids with the exception of Stephen III, a Guaramid. Yet Mir (r. 738–86), the brother of Arč'il, referred to his lineage tracing back to the Mirian and the marital ties between the Xosroianis and the Sasanians on his deathbed even in the ʿAbbāsid period.[63] In short, the presiding princes of Georgia remained tied to the Parthian Mihrānid family either in blood or by marriage until 813. With the elevation of Ašot I to the position of *mt'avar K'art'lisa*, the Bagrationi family, a cadet branch of the Armenian Bagratunis, was installed in power in Georgia. Like in Armenia, this was perceived as the result of a specific ʿAbbāsid policy to uproot Xosroiani

[61] *History of the Kings of K 'art 'li* 1996, 79; Rapp 2014, 249–58.
[62] Rapp 2003.
[63] *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* 1996, 246.

power: "If among the descendants of Vaxt'ang anyone appeared who was worthy to be king, he was put down by the Saracens."[64]

Like in Armenia, the position of the *mt'avar K'art'lisa* allowed a certain level of continuity of administrative norms. It also ensured a continuation of Mihrānid rule, if not always under the Xosroiani branch, until 813. With territories along the Byzantine border in Tao-Klarjet'i, the Georgian Bagrationis, unlike their Armenian brethren, looked toward Byzantium more than the ʿAbbāsids in the early ninth century. Georgian sources link the Mihrānids to the house of T'orgom,[65] a construct designed to tie the Mihrānids to biblical history, which provides a convenient distance from Sasanian parentage of the Mihrānid family. The Bagrationi monarchs, as we will see shortly, may well fit easily into the pages of Byzantine history, but their coins and titles continue to reflect Iranian concepts of power and the extensive value inherent in Sasanian legacy across the Iranian *oikoumene* during the intermezzo.

Arrānshāh

Moving east, the Arrānshāh (Armenian: Aṙanšahik;[66] Georgian: *erist'avi* of Rani) ruled over Albania. Specifically, Dasxuranc'i explains that Albania had once been ruled by Mihrānid rulers, here called Mihrakan (Միհրական), who intermarried with Armenians. Later, another family that appears as Mirhean (Միրհեան) took over Albania in their stead. Dasxuranc'i explains that the Mirhean were a branch of the Sasanian family who arrived in Albania from Persia.[67] We should read the name Mirhean as Mihrānid because of the extensive stories about the eponymous Mihrān in Dasxuranc'i's chapter with the telling title "Concerning the Mihranid [NB: reverting to Mihrakan instead of Mirhean] house, being from the tribe of the Sasanian Xosrov and the *nahagah* of the Albanian houses":[68]

[64] *Book of K'art'li* 1996, 257.

[65] Settipani 2006, 472.

[66] The Armenian title Առանշահիկ has provoked significant debate, mainly because the early Albanian kings went by the family name Եռանշահիկ, which some have seen as a corruption of ایرانشاه. Dowsett 1957, 462; Laurent & Canard 1980, 167, n. 226; Markwart 1903, 457; Minorsky 1953a, 508, n. 7; Toumanoff 1961, 99, and n. 361.

[67] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 338.

[68] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 170: վասն Միհրական տոհմին լինել ի Սասանեան Խոսրովու ցեղէն և լինել նախագահ Աղուանից տանս.

Mihran, a kinsman of Xosrov, fled and united regions of the land under him. He took about thirty thousand families, crossed into the region of Albania, and arrived at the region Uti, near the large city of Partaw.… [Xosrov] speedily sent a humble letter to Mihran: "My dear brother, do not distance yourself from me in enmity. If you are not content to live with me, then wherever my edict finds you, may that be your land for you to inhabit, along with however much [land] your journey has taken you." When the edict came, he happened to be in the mountains of the region Gardman. He read it and was filled with happiness. He saw the goodness of the land and was satisfied to make it his home.[69]

The false distinction between Mihrakan and Mirhean merely intends to signal a difference between two branches of the Mihrānid family: the first cultivated closer relations to the Armenians, while the second identified with Persian power. This second branch of the Mihrānids upset the traditional Armenophile élite who had previously ruled Albania. In this same passage, Dasxuranc'i attests that Mihran executed the chiefs of Jardmān/Gardman. His great-grandson Vardan the Brave beheaded the Armenian élite who had settled in Albanian territory under the previous branch of Mihrānids, sparing only his son-in-law Zarmihr.[70]

Whether the Mihrānids had any reliable connection to the Sasanian monarch remains debatable. It is nevertheless clear that their expressions of legitimacy stemmed from this ancestry, whether invented or real, and in Albania they adopted the title Arrānshāh.[71] Sasanian acceptance of the Arrānshāh in the sixth century may have been intended to spread Persian influence in the North.[72]

When caliphal armies marched into Sasanian lands, the Albanian Mihrānids sent their heir J̌uanšir to Yazdegerd, who welcomed him warmly and honored him: "the king immediately placed his hand on his head, praised [him], and called him *sparapet* of the Albanians."[73] In fact,

[69] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 171: Ուստի լեալ փախստական Միհրանայ ազգակցին Խոսրովու, միաբանէ ընդ իւր զկողմանս աշխարացն. և առեալ երդս իբրև երեսուն հազար անցանէ ի կողմանս Աղուանից, հասանէ յՈւտի գաւառ մերձ ի քաղաքն մեծ Պարտաւ:…Նա իսկ և իսկ առաքէ գիր խոնարհութեան զկնի Միհրանայ. "Եղբայր իմ և հարազատ, մի լիցի քեզ հեռանալ յինէն թշնամութեամբ. և եթէ ոչ հաճեցար ընդ իս բնակել, ուր հրովարտակդ իմ հասանէ, երկիրդ այդ քեզ լիցի ի բնակութիւն, որչափ և հասանեն գնացք ոտից քոց": Եւ ի գալ հրովարտակին պատահի նմա ի սարոտն գաւառին Գարդմանայ. զոր առեալ ընթերցաւ և լի եղև ուրախութեամբ: Եւ տեսեալ զբարելաւութիւն աշխարհին հաճեցաւ ի նմա լինել բնաբար: On this passage, see Toumanoff 1961a, 289–94.

[70] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 172.

[71] Bosworth, "Arrān," *EIr*.

[72] Laurent & Canard 1980, 167, n. 226.

[73] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 174: նոյնժամայն եդեալ արքային զձեռն ի գլուխ նորա գովեաց և կոչեաց զնա սպարապետ Աղուանից:

Dasxuranc'i pontificates at great length about J̌uanšir's bravery and commitment to the Sasanian cause, and his daring and steadfastness in battle. He tells of the wounds that Arab swords inflicted upon J̌uanšir and the multiple dead Muslim soldiers that J̌uanšir delivered to the feet of the Sasanian monarch. The Persians were ultimately defeated, of course, but not before Yazdegerd showered J̌uanšir with innumerable priceless gifts. J̌uanšir "performed praiseworthy, world-famous, intrepid feats of valour, first among the Persians and then at the gates of the Huns, with the result that he was known to east and west, north and south, Aryans and non-Aryans."[74] Dasxuranc'i's sources are early, and perhaps the Aryan/non-Aryan comment reflects the language of an earlier period. But it was relevant enough to be preserved in a tenth-century text. Despite the fact that J̌uanšir at times fought against the Sasanians and later cooperated with caliphal representatives, the descriptions of Mihrānid rulers reflect Albanian association of local rule with the Sasanian power structure.

The perpetuation of the pre-Islamic power structure in Albania, like the neighboring presiding princes, suggests a measure of actual continuity, as well as the selective memory of the late-ʿAbbāsid-era Iranian élite. By the ninth and tenth centuries even Iranian authors writing in Arabic corrupted *Arrānshāh* to read *Līrānshāh*[75] and other early-ʿAbbāsid texts refer instead to *baṭrīq Arrān*, "the patrician of Albania," or *ṣāḥib Arrān*, "the master of Albania,"[76] thus divorcing the title from its Sasanian roots. This sort of dissonance is not uncommon in sources about the North. Both Masʿūdī and Ibn Ḥawqal similarly refer to a "king of Sharwānshāh," so they no longer identify Sharwānshāh as a title. The persistence of the term *Arrānshāh*, then, cannot be explained solely based on Iranian rhetoric of a later generation. Still, Dasxuranc'i's text suggests that even the expressions of power remained intact after the Islamic incursions, as the "King of the South" (the caliph) presented weapons, robes, prized animals (elephants and parrots), and wealth to J̌uanšir, mirroring Yazdegerd's offering. Thus according to Armenian texts, the *shāhanshāh*s and caliphs

[74] Dasxuranc'i 1961, 123–4, 1983, 191–2: դրուատայեղց, համաշխարհալուր կատարեաց զերիս ի չորից անտի, նախ ի Պարսս, ապա ի դրունս Հոնաց անվեհեր քաջութիւնս՝ անսխալ գոլով, մինչ զի արևելից և արևմտից, հիւսիսոյ և հարաւոյ, յԱրիս և յԱնարիս հրատարակաւոր ամենեցուն և քաջափարթամ եցոյց ծանոթութի ւն։

[75] Balādhurī 1866, 196; Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 124. On the difference between ایرانشاه and եռանշահիկ, see Markwart 1903, 457, and Dowsett 1957, 462.

[76] Azdī 1967, 358; Crone 2012, 58; Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 562.

not only sustained Mihrānid rule in Albania, but also did so using the same vocabulary of sovereignty.

THE LOCAL NOBILITY

Under the authority of the foreign governor and the local princes, the mainstay of local power remained in prevailing noble houses, each of which had a *nahapet* or patriarch sitting at its head. The words *naxarar* and *nahapet* (Middle Persian: **nāfapet*; Georgian: *naxapeti*), like the other titles seen thus far, come from the Iranian setting: Middle Persian *naxust*, or "first," and *–dār*, "keeper, holder" combine to make the Armenian *naxarar* via the Parthian *naχwadār.*[77] This Parthian also appears in Sogdian as *nāfdār* and in Syriac as *nwhdr* (ܢܘܗܕܪ ܒܝܬ).[78] The Armenian word for lower nobility, *azat*, literally "freeman," is similarly Iranian, comparable to the Parthian *āzāt* and Middle Persian *āzād.*[79]

The Names Baṭāriqa, Aḥrār, *and* Abnāʾ al-Mulūk

Arabic sources refer to the nobility of the North as *baṭāriqa* (patricians), *aḥrār* (freemen), or *abnāʾ al-mulūk* (sons of kings). F. Amabe's claim that the word *aḥrār* is an Arabic calque on the Armenian *naxarar* is not convincing, since it skips over the traditional association of *aḥrār* with Persian rule in Arabic sources.[80] In Arabic, the term *aḥrār* refers to Persian forces that resisted the Islamic conquest:[81]

> And as for the people of Persia (Fārs), in former times they were the greatest nation in terms of sovereignty, the most in wealth and the strongest in might, such that the Arabs used to call them freemen (*aḥrār*), because they used to capture but

[77] Gippert 1993, I 142–54; Hübschmann 1908, 200; P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 548–9. See also Benveniste 1929, 5–7; Grousset 1984, 287–8; Laurent & Canard 1980, 112, n. 59; Meillet 1922, 3; Toumanoff 1963, 115–16, n. 188.

[78] Hennig 1953, 134. For more references, see "nwhdr, nwhdr" in the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project hosted by the Hebrew Union College at http://cal.huc.edu/.

[79] P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 512.

[80] Amabe 1995, 113. This suggestion is reasonable, though. Zakeri focuses on drawing a link between the *abnāʾ* of Yemen and those farther east; his primary goal is to clarify the origins of the *abnāʾ al-dawla*. The use of *aḥrār* and *abnāʾ* in Armenia does not fit entirely comfortably with the narrative that he proposes. Furthermore, Yāqūt (see later) specifies that the *aḥrār* in Armenia are not the same as those in Yemen or Sogdiana.

[81] Bosworth, "Aḥrār" *EIr*; Nöldeke 1879, 235: "*Banul-ahrâr* (aramäisch b'nai ḥêrê), 'die Freien' ist stehende Bezeichnung der Perser"; Zakeri 1995, 266–7.

never be captured and they were served but never served. Then God, may He be exalted and glorified, brought Islam.[82]

The term *aḥrār* appears in reference to the children of Sasanian lesser nobility (*āzādān*) in Yemen and Sogdiana. Instead of translating *aḥrār* as *naxarar*s, we should instead assume that the Arabic *aḥrār* is a direct translation of *āzāt*s, *āzādān*, *azat*s, or *aznaurni*s:[83] the terms literally mean "freemen" in Arabic, Parthian, Middle Persian, Armenian, and Georgian.

Baṭāriqa (patricians) and *abnāʾ al-mulūk* (literally: "sons of kings") refer to the higher ranks of the nobility, the *naxarar*s. Like *aḥrār*, the phrase *abnāʾ al-mulūk* ties the North into the broader Iranian *oikoumene*. It commonly appears in Arabic sources in reference to the fourth *fitna*. In his bid for the Caliphate, Maʾmūn relied on Khurāsānī Arabs and *abnāʾ al-mulūk*, whom A. Elad defines as "the high Iranian nobility, presumably the princes of the non-Arab kingdoms on the borders of Khurāsān and Transoxania."[84] F. Amabe translates the *abnāʾ al-mulūk* in accounts of the *fitna* as "indigenous lords," again in the context of Sogdiana and Ushrūsana.[85] P. Crone identifies at least one instance in reference to the earlier ʿAbbāsid period where the *abnāʾ al-mulūk* are specified as *ʿajam*: a rebel who was *min abnāʾ al-mulūk aʿājim khurāsān*.[86]

E. de la Vaissière's *Samarcande et Samarra* (2007) examined the use of the phrase in ʿAbbāsid-era texts as a potential remnant of Sasanian-era social structure. Concerning both *abnāʾ al-mulūk* and the comparable phrase *awlād mulūk al-Ṣughd* (literally, "children of the kings of Sogdiana"), he explains that there are three possible interpretations. First, it could be the Arabic translation of the Sogdian *ʾʾztpyδrk* ("fils de noble"), attested in the fourth-century Sogdian letters. He dismisses this interpretation because of the mercantile context of the letters, which does not fit with the military context frequently evoked in passages about the *abnāʾ al-mulūk*.

82 Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 317: فاما اهل فارس فكانوا فى سالف الدهر اعظم الامم ملكا واكثرهم اموالا واشدّهم شوكة وكانت العرب تدعوهم الاحرار لانهم كانوا يسبّون ولا يسبّون ويستخدمون ولا يستخدمون ثم اتى الله عزّ وجلّ بالاسلام; see also Suhaylī 2000, I 189: وقوله لفارس الأحرار فلأنّ الملك فيهم متوارث من أوّل الدّنيا من عهد جيومرت في زعمهم إلى أن جاء الإسلام لم يدينوا لملك من غيرهم ولا أدّوا الأتاوة لذي سلطان من سواهم فكانوا أحرارا لذلك

83 Laurent & Canard 1980, 117, n. 121; P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 512–13; on the Georgian, see Toumanoff, 1959, 45, n. 98 and 99–101; Toumanoff 1963, 124. Rapp 2014, 88: *aznauri* is not necessarily from *āzāt* like the Armenian *azat* is, but from the Armenian ազնիւ or ազնաւուր. For references to the Aramaic, see "[ʾzdʾ]" and "br ḥyryn" (ברחרין or ܒܪ ܚܐܪ̈ܐ) in the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project hosted by the Hebrew Union College at http://cal.huc.edu/.

84 Elad 2005, 318.

85 Amabe 1995, 136.

86 Crone 1998, 16–17.

He then suggests that it could render the Middle Persian *vaspurakan*, "noble" (whence the toponym Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan in southern Armenia). La Vaissière also dismisses this possibility as too formulaic: "l'abondance comme la diversité de ces notations semblent interdire d'y voir une simple formule sassanide stéréotypée." Finally, he suggests that the term *abnāʾ al-mulūk* might in fact be descriptive, taking into account the social stratification of Sogdian society in the aftermath of the Islamic conquest. As evidence, La Vaissière produces several examples of *abnāʾ al-mulūk* in conquest narratives of the East to suggest that the Islamic incursions left a stratum of unlanded nobles in Sogdiana who, lacking traditional sources of income, ended up in the service of the caliphal army.[87]

With the evidence of the Armenian and Albanian *abnāʾ al-mulūk*, we might embrace La Vaissière's conclusions as regionally specific to the East, but also revive his second suggestion for the North. Yaʿqūbī, who lived in Armenia and presumably would have had knowledge of Armenian and Albanian élite, mentioned that Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī "wrote to the *abnāʾ al-mulūk* and the *baṭāriqa*" and pacified them, but soon thereafter Hārūn al-Rashīd appointed Khuzayma b. Khāzim, who "captured the *baṭāriqa* and *abnāʾ al-mulūk,* decapitated them, and treated them in the worst possible manner."[88] C. Toumanoff glosses these passages: the *baṭāriqa* here refer to the presiding princes, while *abnāʾ al-mulūk* are the upper nobility ("princely dynasts"). Specifically, *abnāʾ al-mulūk* renders the Georgian *sepʻecul* or the Armenian *sepuh* or *sepakan*, which in turn render the Parthian term *vispuhr.*[89]

The Old Persian equivalent of the Parthian word *vispuhr* "was considered a collation of two words, the first *visō*, 'of the (royal) house' [being the gen. case of *vis*-, '(royal) house'] and the second *puθra*- 'son.'" This certainly predates our period of interest, but the word also appears in the Sasanian context in the trilingual inscriptions of Naqsh-i Rustam both implicitly an explicitly. The Middle Persian and Parthian ideogram *br bytʾ* (בר ביתא), Aramaic for "son of the house," reads as ὁ ἐκ βασιλέων in the corresponding Greek.[90] A closer translation is the explicit reference to "the

[87] La Vaissière 2007, 34.

[88] Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 518: و جمعت ليزيد بن مزيد ارمينية و آذربيجان فلمّا قدم تلاءمت الناس و اصلح البلد و ساوى بين النزاريّة و اليمانية و كتب الى أبناء الملوك و البطارقة يبسط آمالهم فاستوى البلد. ثمّ ولّى الرشيد خزيمة بن خازم التميميّ فاخذ البطارقة و أبناء الملوك فضرب اعناقهم و سار فيهم أسوء سيرة

[89] Toumanoff 1952, 220; note that he does distance the Georgian equivalent from *vispuhr* in the footnote.

[90] Benveniste 1966, 22–3; Driver 1957, 41; Frye 1969, 81–4; Schaeder 1936. The Syriac ܥܒܕ ܡܠܟ appears instead as "servants." Its use as "prince" is a calque on the OP; see

son of the king": *mlkʾ brh* in Middle Persian and *mlkʾ bry* in Parthian, rendered in Greek as υἱὸς τοῦ βασιλέως and in Syriac as ܒܪ ܡܠܟܐ.

The Arabic *abnāʾ al-mulūk*, a direct translation, represents one single link in a long history of an Iranian title that was in fact current under Sasanian rule and into the ʿAbbāsid period. Our ʿAbbāsid-era authors obviously did not make a clear connection between the Aramaic *br bytʾ*, the Old Persian *vīsōpuθra*, the Sogdian *wyšpšy*, the Georgian *sepʿecul*, the Armenian *sepuh*, the Parthian *vispuhr*, and the Arabic *abnāʾ al-mulūk*. The route from one language to the other was clearly circuitous. In Arabic, the Armenian *sepuh* appears translated, albeit rarely, as *wārithī*, "heir": Ṭabarī's Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Wārithī l-Naṣrānī refers to Sinbāṭ b. Ashūṭ, the Arabization of Smbat Aplabas Bagratuni the son of Ašot Msaker.[91]

Dasxuranc'i, in referring to Albanian nobility under Sasanian rule, refers to Albanian *ordikʿ tʿagaworazancʿ*, again translating some version of the same title. This passage refers to an Albanian catholicos named Viroy who rallied the Albanian nobility against the Khazars during the short reign of Kavād II (r. 628) or in the first year of Ardašīr III (r. 628–30): "The catholicos gathered to him all of the princes, sons of the great royals [*ordikʿ tʿagaworazancʿ*] of our land, provincial and city governors, priests, deacons, and scribes."[92] This phrase also appears in another tenth-century source to refer to the princes of ʿAbbāsid Armenia. T'ovma Arcruni has Mutawakkil identify the Arcruni *naxarar*s as "true sons of kings (*ordikʿ tʿagaworacʿn*) of that country."[93]

Accordingly, both Arabic terms for the nobility of the North, *aḥrār* and *abnāʾ al-mulūk*, serve to cue the readers into their ties to Iranian power and draw on pre-Islamic models of the social structure not just in Armenia and Albania, but in the broader Iranian *oikoumene*. The use of the title *abnāʾ al-mulūk* may indeed have changed in the North, as La Vaissière suggests in the East, but there is no evidence for this. While the *abnāʾ al-mulūk* of the North appear in the caliphal army, they are unlike their Sogdian counterparts in that they typically remained on their own frontiers. While La Vaissière identifies *abnāʾ al-mulūk* as the

"br by, br byt" in the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project hosted by the Hebrew Union College at http://cal.huc.edu/.

[91] Ṭabarī 1893, III 1416.

[92] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 157: Եւ ժողովեալ առ ինքն կաթողիկոսին զամենայն գլխաւորս, զորդիս թագաւորազանց մեծաց աշխարհիս, զգաւառապետս և զգիւղապետս, զերիցուս և զսարկաւագունս և զդպիրս.

[93] T'ovma Arcruni 1985a, 221; 1985b, 244: որդիք թագաւորացն այսր աշխարհի լեալ էք դուք.

unlanded and disenfranchised of the Sogdian élite, it seems that the Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian equivalents of that stratum emigrated to Byzantium or Caucasian territories where caliphal control faltered, in particular Tao-Klarjet'i and Abkhāz/Ap'xazet'i.

The Role of the Nobility

The local nobility controlled the administration of daily affairs within their lands, the tax collection, the maintenance of the cavalry, and even matters regarding ecclesiastical succession. While modern scholarship in the West suggests that there is no reason to doubt that the system survived the Islamic incursions and the first years of the Caliphate undisturbed, Soviet historians were not quite convinced.[94] The matter is thus still contested.

Recently N. Garsoïan tracked several changes in the social structure of Armenia, starting even before the arrival of caliphal rule. Among her conclusions, she notes that with the start of caliphal rule, "les titres byzantins disparaissent,"[95] at least in Armenian sources. The shift away from Byzantine titulature with the advent of caliphal governance appears too tactful and advantageous to be spurious and it fits with the perceptions of tenth-century Arabic sources, which convey the assumption of continuity. As Iṣṭakhrī put it, Armenia "remained in the hands of the chiefs (*al-kubarā'*) of the Christians, who are in the majority in Armenia."[96] Their duties to empire – the provision of cavalry and taxes – were repaid by protection from Byzantium and the peoples of the northern Caucasus.

Even more than the presiding princes, the nobility represents a measure of autonomy allowed to Armenia and Albania, possibly even at odds with the representatives of the center. By the end of the fifth century, Armenians had gained the right to bypass the *marzbān* and to address the Sasanian monarch directly. R. Grousset thought this greatly to the

[94] Adontz 1970, 165–6: "Although modified in some of its aspects, this system survived in Armenia until the fall of the Bagratids, and its final destruction came only with the Mongol invasions." Martin-Hisard 1997, 78–9: "L'établissement de la domination arabe n'a pas au début profondément change ce système…Les grandes familles ne perdirent dans l'ensemble rien de leurs droits ancestraux et on est surtout frappé à partir de ce moment, par l'acuité de leurs rivalités qu'explique en partie la nouvelle coexistence, sur le territoire arménien réunifié par la conquête arabe, de familles et de regions jusqu'alors séparées par la frontière byzantino-perse." Minorsky 1953a, 504; Ter-Łevondyan 1974, 20.

[95] Garsoïan 2012a, 56.

[96] Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 188: ولم تزل في ايدى الكبرآء من النصارى وهم الغالب على اهل ارمينية

detriment to the position of *marzbān*, a "privilège précieux qui les faisait pratiquement échapper à la juridiction du *marzbân* perse."[97] However, we must remember that the priorities of the *marzbān*s were not focused on matters of daily administration or even on balancing the ambitions of the *naxarar*s and *erist'avi*s, but rather on military maintenance of the frontier. As such, the privilege actually allowed the *marzbān* to function as he was meant to do, while allowing the concerns of the nobility to be aired in Ctesiphon instead of Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw. This practice continued during the period of direct caliphal rule, as we have examples of both nobles and clergy making requests and appeals directly to the caliph. There are occasional references to nobles bypassing the caliphal governors in the North, such as Ašot Bagratuni's visit to Marwān despite the presence of the caliphal governor Isḥāq b. Muslim in Dabīl/Duin.[98]

N. Garsoïan further demonstrates that the noble families in Armenia in the Arsacid and Sasanian periods were largely independent, "sur un modèle iranien, plutôt parthe que sassanide."[99] This holds true under caliphal control, as well. Arabic sources repeatedly mention that Armenian and Albanian *baṭāriqa* were essentially independent even into the ʿAbbāsid period. Sahl b. Sunbāṭ, whose name in Armenian appears Persianized as Sahl-i Smbatean, the patrician of Shakkī/Šak'ē and later Arrānshāh in the ninth century, promised unhindered repose to the rebel Bābak, assuring him that "[y]ou know my position; there is no contact between me and the central power (*al-sulṭān*, i.e., the central power of Islam, meaning the caliphate), and you will not be coming into the presence of one of that power's adherents."[100] Of course, Sahl then proceeded to turn Bābak in to Afshīn despite his assurances, so either caliphal power was stronger than this statement suggests or Sahl's own ambitions caused him to betray Bābak. The latter seems more likely. Masʿūdī has Sahl say to Bābak: "You

[97] Grousset 1984, 227. There is occasionally a comparison to this in the period of caliphal rule: consider, for example, the fate of Tačat Anjewac'i, who was appointed as *išxan* directly by the order of Hārūn al-Rashīd despite the discontent of the caliphal governor, ʿUthmān. ʿUthmān then sent Tačat to fight the Khazars, where he conveniently died. Hārūn rightly considered this an act of disobedience on ʿUthmān's part and removed him from his position. This episode demonstrates that the governor may have indeed been jealously guarding his power in Armenia. However, the general tenor of the sources indicates that the governors were not involved or interested in the Armenian administration.

[98] Ter-Łevondyan 1966, 198 argues that this was a unique case and that Armenians only had recourse to the caliph specifically to air complaints against the caliphal governor.

[99] Garsoïan 1994, 119, 2012a, 42, 2012b, 42.

[100] Amabe 1995, 115; Ṭabarī 1893, III 1223: تعرف موضعى ليس بيني وبين السلطان عمل ولا تدخل على احد من اصحاب السلطان; Ṭabarī 1991, XXXIII 77.

are just a herder of cows and sheep. What have you got to do with the management of kingship, political decisions, or armies?"[101] Bābak's fall, then, indicates Sahl's own sense of arrogance, and not his subservience to the ʿAbbāsids.

The independence of the *naxarar*s is also attested in Armenian sources. For example, when Apusēt‘, or Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, was governor of Armenia (850–1), the *išxan Hayoc‘* Bagarat Bagratuni sent an envoy to him to impede his entrance into Bagratuni territory. According to T‘ovma Arcruni, Abū Saʿīd "merely indicated that the reason for his coming concerned taxes and other administrative matters. So they had the royal taxes and dues given to him and sent him back whence he had come. He returned to Samarra."[102] According to this account, in line with references to Sahl-i Smbatean in Arabic literature given earlier, it seems that the *naxarar*s were functionally tributary in their own territories, where the presence of caliphal administration was negligible. Later in this passage, T‘ovma explicitly states that Abū Saʿīd's tax collector (*ʿāmil ʿalā l-kharāj wa-l-ḍiyā‘*) Alay Cavap‘i, or ʿAlāʾ b. Aḥmad al-Azdī al-Sawwāfī,[103] had the right to enter Arcruni territory for the purposes of tax collection: "when you enter any Armenian city as governors have the right, we shall give you the [due] amount of taxes and satisfy you."[104] The problem arose when ʿAlāʾ subsequently "began to move around the whole territory of Vaspurakan,"[105] which presumably should have been the reserve of the Arcrunis.

Arabic texts instead describe caliphal rule and domains based mainly around cities, even if Muslim (both Arab and Iranian) families controlled their own territories elsewhere. As a result, caliphal governance appears more concrete in capital cities such as Bardhʿa/Partaw and Dabīl/Duin, as well as the frontiers Qālīqalā/Karin, Tiflīs/Tp‘ilisi, and Bāb al-Abwāb/

[101] Crone 2012, 73; See also Minorsky 1953a, 510.

[102] T‘ovma Arcruni 1985a, 175, 1985b, 172: ոչ ինչ յայտնեաց զխորհուրդս չարութեանն, զոր խորհեալ էին ի վերայ նոցա. բայց միայն զհարկաց և զայլ հոգաբարձութենէ ծանուցանէ զպատճառ գալստեանն. և նոքա տան տանել նմա զհարկս և հասս արքունի և դարձուցանեն զնա ընդ նոյն ուստի եկն: Նորա դարձեալ դառնայ ի Սամառայ.

[103] On this identification, see Laurent & Canard 1980, 446, citing Markwart 1930, 300, 314, 504.

[104] T‘ovma Arcruni 1985a, 178–9, 1985b, 178: արդ դու յարուցեալ զնասցես ի մի քաղաքացդ Հայոց, որպէս օրէն է աշխարհակալաց. և մեք տացուք քեզ զհասս հարկացն և հաճեսցուք զմիտս քո.

[105] T‘ovma Arcruni 1985a, 179, 1985b, 178: սկսաւ շրջել ընդ բոլոր աշխարհիս Վասպո ւրական.

Darband.[106] The assumption, then, is that the nobles continued their rule over the countryside largely independently in much the same fashion as they had under Sasanian rule. Balādhurī posits explicit claims to continuity of the independent Armenian *naxarar*s:

> The patricians of Armenia remained in their lands, each one of them protecting his own region. When a governor went to the frontier they would come around him. If they saw virtue and strictness in him and if he was strong and well-armed, they paid tribute to him and capitulated to him. If not, they thought he was weak and belittled him.[107]

Of course, Balādhurī was a boon companion of Mutawakkil, whose struggles to maintain the North through Bughā's infamous campaigns dictated later Armenian and Arabic historical writing about Armenia and Albania. But Yaʿqūbī's *History* corroborates Balādhurī's statement with traditions about how the northern élite refused to recognize or to acknowledge the caliphal governor, the first under Hārūn al-Rashīd, then again under Muʿtaṣim.[108]

Identifying the Nobles

M. Zakeri suggests that the nobles (*aḥrār*) in Arabic sources are the Sasanian *āzādān*. He bases this on the (later) passage from Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī:

> They were nobles of Armenia before the Persians conquered it. Then they were emancipated by the Persians and reaffirmed as kings in their territories. They are different from the Persian *aḥrār* who were in Yemen and Fārs, since [the latter] were never ruled by someone else before Islam, and were called *aḥrār* because of their nobility.[109]

This, Zakeri argues, could refer to the "descendants of the Sāsānid *āzādān*," whom he defines as Persian settlers brought in during

[106] Arab presence in Armenian cities: Dennett, 1939, 22; Laurent & Canard 1980, 198; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 125. This may be a factor of the urban focus of Arabic histories and geographies. Musallam 1996, 165: "The history of the Middle East is the history of its cities, where commerce and learning, industry and art, government and faith flourished"; Wheatley 2000.

[107] Balādhurī, ed. de Goeje (1866), 210–11: ولم يزل بطارقة ارمينية مقيمين فى بلادهم يحمى كلّ واحد منهم ناحيته فاذا قدم الثغرعامل من عُمّاله داروه فان راوا منه عفّة وصرامة وكان في قوّة وعدّة ادّوا اليه الخراج واذعنوا له بالطاعة والّا اغتمزوا فيه واستخفّوا بامره.; Amabe, *Emergence* (1995), 113.

[108] Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 519: و ولّى سليمان بن يزيد بن الاصمّ العامرى و كان شيخا عفيفا، مغفّلا فضعف حتّى لم يكن له امر يجوز حتّى كاد أن يغلب على البلد; II 579–80.

[109] Zakeri 1995, 267; Yāqūt 1995, I 161: وسئل بعض علماء الفرس عن الأحرار الذين بأرمينية لم سمّوا بذلك؟ فقال هم الذين كانوا نبلاء بأرض أرمينية قبل أن تملكها الفرس، ثم إن الفرس أعتقوهم لما ملكوا وأقروهم على ولايتهم، وهم بخلاف الأحرار من الفرس الذين كانوا باليمن وبفارس فإنهم لم يملكوا قط قبل الإسلام فسمّوا أحراراً لشرفهم

Anūshirwān's reign. To support this he cites Balādhurī, who mentions that Anūshirwān settled Persian populations in the region and recognized "Caucasian kings" (*mulūk jabal al-Qabq*).[110] Still, Yāqūt's "nobles of Armenia before the Persians conquered it" clearly refers to the Armenian nobles rather than any Persian élite. Otherwise we must reconcile how Anūshirwān could have settled *aḥrār* in Armenia "before the Persians conquered it."

Studies of the nobility in Armenia have been extensive, detailing the fate of every house and their survival through the early ʿAbbāsid period. This topic has mainly been the purview of Byzantinists, who have approached the sources in Armenian and Greek in order to explain the changes in the structure and make-up of late Roman and early Byzantine élite through the upheaval of the Islamic conquest, including in the Caucasian provinces during the "interregnum" or "les siècles obscurs" when Byzantine power waned in the North. These studies therefore set the significance of the longevity of Armenian and Albanian families into the late Roman and Byzantine narrative.[111]

Albanian and Armenian ruling families, including the Mamikoneans, Bagratunis, Siwnis, Arcrunis, Kamsarakans, and the Mihrānids,[112] survived the seventh century and might be heralded as markers of continuity between the Sasanian and caliphal periods. Even though we know of demographic changes in eastern Anatolia as a result of Byzantine policy and rebellions against caliphal rule, C. Settipani concludes that

> pour les plus importantes, on dispose d'informations suffisantes pour construire des arbres généalogiques assez précis, voire touffus. Les Mamikonian, les Bagratouni, les Arçrouni, les Kamsarakan, les Siwni sont de ceux-là. Ces cinq familles sont connues sans interruptions du début du IV^e^ siècle au moins (voire de la fin du III^e^ siècle) jusqu'au IX^e^ siècle. On peut leur ajouter les familles souveraines des principautés formant les marges des royaumes caucasiens, en Abasgie, en Lazique et en Albanie et enfin, la dynastie (ou les dynasties) qui ont régné en Ibérie à partir du IV^e^ siècle.[113]

[110] Zakeri cites Balādhurī 1866, 195–6 and 200. Here I have assumed that he means واقرّ ملوك جبل القبق على ممالكهم :197 ;واسكن هذه الحصون والقلاع ذوى الباس والنجدة من سياسيجيّة :195 وصالحهم على الاتاوة.

[111] Wickham 2005, 170: "By 800 there is not a single person, anywhere in the former empire, with the exceptions of the Mamikonian and Bagratuni families in Armenia, whose male-line ancestors in 400 are securely known"; Settipani 2006, 10. Others put this into an ʿAbbāsid setting, see Garsoïan & Martin-Hisard 2012, 54.

[112] Settipani 2006, 11, n. 1.

[113] Settipani 2006, 485.

Here we are struck with the difficulty of deciding which of the families are "les plus importantes" from a historical perspective. Could an observer in the Sasanian period have guessed that Arcrunis would emerge with their own kingdom in the tenth century instead of the Mamikoneans? Similarly, S. Rapp, discussing the rise of the Bagrationi in Georgia, noted that "even the most indiscriminate gambler would not dare to have wagered heavily on this family just three centuries before."[114] It is only with the benefit of hindsight that we can declare certain families more or less important than others.

It is more prudent to discuss broad elements of continuity, such as the prominent Armenian and Albanian families that survived through the early caliphal period, while still balancing the reordering and/or disappearance of others through emigration, war, or absorption into larger families. Armenian sources, Łewond in particular, are vocal about the loss of the *naxarar* families. The Armenians rebelled during or soon after the *fitna* of Ibn al-Zubayr. When Marwānid forces gained control of the Caliphate, Muḥammad b. Marwān set fire to Armenia. According to Łewond, Muḥammad "fabricated a vile plot to remove the noble houses along with their cavalry from our land of Armenia."[115] Later, Łewond announces the success of this notorious plan: "In killing all of them, they rendered this land heirless of *naxarar*s. At that time the land of Armenia was empty of its ancestral *naxarar* houses and they were delivered like sheep in the midst of wolves."[116]

While Łewond's *History* presents a very different sort of narrative, that of annihilation instead of continuity, we must start by placing the text chronologically and in its proper political milieu. Łewond wrote in the last quarter of the eighth century, earlier than the accounts cited previously. Although his history has a noticeable thread of pro-Arab sentiment, Łewond's antipathy toward caliphal rule usually appears in relation to the Church, here in the form of an emotional diatribe against

[114] Rapp 2003, 337.

[115] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 18r: եթող յաշխարհիս հա/յ\ոց իշխան փոխանակ իւր յիսմաելացւոցն. որոյ խորհուրդ վատ ի մէջ առեալ բառնալ զազատախումբ տոհմն յաշխարհէս հա/յ\ոց հանդերձ նոցին հեծելովք: Łewond 1857, 43.

[116] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 26v: զնոսա զամենեսին բարձեալ ի կենաց անժառանգ առնէին զաշխարհս ի նախարարաց: Յայնմ ժամանակի թափուր եղեալ աշխարհս հա/յ\ոց ի տոհմէ նախարարաց մատնէին որպէս զոչխարս ի մէջ գայլոց. Łewond 1857, 58. The perception that the *naxarar* families are losing numbers is echoed in Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 114.

Muḥammad b. Marwān's burning of the churches of Nashawā/Naxčawan and Xram. He vividly laments the martyrdom of the Armenians, dwelling on the steadfast character of those praying for salvation as the building burned around them. The *naxarar*s were extracted from the church before the immolation, but then tortured and killed after they proffered all of their treasure. The burning of the churches, although it appears in Arabic, Syriac, and Greek, never again rings with such clearness as an event of religious persecution, cast as martyrdom. Łewond's response to the quashing of the Armenian rebellion soon after the second *fitna* is therefore charged with political expectation. Couched in overtly religious terms, it intends to demonstrate to his eighth-century Bagratuni sponsor the folly of pro-ʿAbbāsid policy and, possibly, even to rally a Christian Armenian audience against caliphal control.[117]

As an early text predating the rise of independent Armenian kingdoms and principalities, Łewond's history demonstrates no concerns about positing continuity or the legacy of local rule in the Sasanian period. Łewond had no reason to vouch for continuity of the *naxarar* families and every reason to stress Arab abuse of the Armenian Church and the local nobility. Interestingly, later Armenian texts drop the martyrdom narrative entirely. Further, Łewond's claim of annihilation of the Armenian nobility is diametrically opposed to the multiple Arabic sources arguing for continuity from the Sasanian to the ʿAbbāsid periods, such as the works of Balādhurī, Iṣṭakhrī, and Yāqūt. Again, it appears that the written traditions in both Arabic and Armenian are overstating things: there were significant changes in the political and social structure in the North, but there were a few noticeable signs of continuity as well.

Sasanian Legitimacy in the North during the Iranian Intermezzo

Armenian historians described caliphal rule through a Sasanian lens. The comparison of Yazdegerd and Mutawakkil seen at the start of this chapter might well be in code, designed to spur Armenians to revolt against the Caliphate in the same way that Vardan stood against the Sasanians. The bloody campaigns of Bughā left uncharted and unresolved bitterness and acrimony, to put it mildly. Still, we must keep in mind that the comparison between Yazdegerd and Mutawakkil dates to the tenth century. This

[117] Vacca 2016.

places it in a larger pattern of tenth-century Armenian concern for presenting leadership in relation to the regions' Sasanian past. Why would the early eleventh-century historian Asołik refer to Grigor Mamikonean as *marzbān*, and not *išxan Hayoc'*? Why would the tenth-century historian Dasxuranc'i charge his description of an *Arrānshāh* who cooperated with the caliphal army with expressions of Sasanian leadership? Why is it in the tenth century that the term *ostikan* suddenly appears in Armenian sources to refer to the caliphal governor?

If Sasanian rule sounds similar to caliphal rule in the North, it does not necessarily follow that this is a factor of continuity. Most of our sources date to the tenth century, when we know that élite across the Iranian *oikoumene* relied on Sasanian descriptors of political power. Following the death of Mutawakkil in 861, local families in Armenia, Albania, and Georgia exerted their independence. The Bagratunis had served as *išxan Hayoc'* throughout the period of caliphal rule, culminating in Ašot Bagratuni's tenure in 862. He was subsequently recognized as king of Armenia in or around the year 884. Scions of the Georgian branch of the Bagratuni family, the Bagrationis, had served as *mt'avra K'art'lisa* since 813, and in 888 they reinstated the Georgian monarchy. We do not have consistent evidence for the position of Arrānshāh, but the *History of Bāb al-Abwāb* explains that the Sharwānshāhs and Layzanshāhs in Albania broke from caliphal control "when in 861 disturbances broke out after the murder of Mutawakkil," and the same source similarly attributes the independence of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband to the so-called Decade of Anarchy.[118] Finally, the Arcruni family also took advantage of the lapse of caliphal control, founding the kingdom of Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan in 908.

With the decline of ʿAbbāsid power and regional independence at the end of the ninth and throughout the tenth centuries, the predominant expressions of power in the North were Iranian, inspired by regionally-specific memories of the Sasanian Empire. At the end of the ninth century, Ibn Khurradādhbih traces the name Sharwānshāh to the reign of Ardašīr. Masʿūdī, writing in the tenth century, identifies the contemporary Sharwānshāh as the descendent of Bahrām Gōr and later historians trace their line to Anūshirwān himself.[119] Throughout the tenth century, the Sharwānshāhs maintained traditionally Muslim names, such as Muḥammad, Yazīd, and Aḥmad; thereafter, though, they claim Iranian names such as Qubādh, Manūchihr, Farīburz, and Afrīdūn. Although the

[118] Munajjim-Bāshī 1958, 26 in English and 4 in Arabic.
[119] Bosworth 1973, 60.

Sharwānshāhs were in fact the descendants of Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī, Minorsky explains that the family went through an extended and continuous process of "Iranicisation," particularly strong at the end of the tenth century. "The attraction of a Sassanian pedigree proved stronger than the recollection of Shaybānī lineage."[120]

Like the Sharwānshāhs in Albania, the three Christian kingdoms in the North expressed their power by evoking Sasanian legacy in the North. Both Armenian and Arabic sources from the tenth century refer to Bagratuni kings as *shāhanshāh*s.[121] We saw in Chapter 1 the inscription in Arabic on the walls of Hałpat, identifying Smbat Bagratuni as *shāhanshāh Anih al-malik*. An Armenian inscription, also from the tenth century, refers to the Bagratuni kings as *Hayoc' ew Vrac' šahanšah*, i.e., the *shāhanshāh* of the Armenians and the Georgians.[122] We should consider this an extension of contemporary shifts in the expressions of power in the broader Iranian *oikoumene*, as the tenth-century reemergence of the Sasanian title *shāhanshāh*, "king of kings," has been well-documented in Būyid and even, if rarely, in Sāmānid territories.[123] Bagratunis, as part of the broader Iranian *oikoumene*, were able to fashion their own memory of the past and their claims to legitimacy in the same terms as their Muslim neighbors.

The Arcruni family similarly experimented with the memory of Sasanian power, this time through their imagery instead of their titles. At the start of the tenth century Gagik Arcruni son of Derenik, the king of Basfurrajān/Vaspurakan, known as Jājīq b. al-Dayrānī in Arabic, commissioned the famous Church of the Holy Cross at Ałt'amar. His portrait is carved on the western façade of the church, where he appears dressed in sumptuous robes that evoke the motifs, style, and cut of the clothes of Sasanian kings depicted at Ṭāq-i Bustān.[124] Gagik also stands taller than Jesus, in the same way that the Sasanian *shāhanshāh* is larger than Ahura Mazda and Anahit at Ṭāq-i Bustān. His crown, though currently much damaged, imitates Sasanian royal accoutrements with wings and

[120] Minorsky 1958, 116.

[121] Ter-Łevondyan 1986, 790; See Munajjim Bāshī 1953, 5: وكان للكورة جرزان وغيرها من ارمينية ملك يقال له اشوط بن العبّاس وكان ملقّبا بشاهنشاه.; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 74–5 and 95–6 on Asołik and Drasxanakertc'i.

[122] Ter-Łevondyan 1986, 790.

[123] Bosworth 1973, 57; Madelung 1969; Treadwell 2003.

[124] Der Nersessian 1965, 31; Eastmond & Jones 2001, 159; Sakisian 1935, 292–3. Cf. Compareti 1999. On the commonalities between Ałt'amar and the portraits on the churches of Ṭayr/Tao/Tayk', which Compareti ascribes to Byzantine style, cf. Garsoïan 1994, 120.

FIGURE 4.1 Sculptural relief of Gagik Arcruni on the Church of Ałt'amar, ca. 914. Photo courtesy of Thomas Klobe.

FIGURE 4.2 Medallion of the Būyid *amīr* Rukn al-Dawla, 962.
Photo from Miles 1964, reproduced with the permission of the American Numismatic Society.

FIGURE 4.3 Coin of Ḵosrow II, 612/3.
Photo courtesy of the Princeton University Numismatic Collection, Department of Coins and Medals, Firestone Library.

even an orb. Gagik's crown might in fact be closer in style to Būyid coins than actual Sasanian portraits (though Rukn al-Dawla's portrait postdates Gagik's),[125] which locates the visual vocabulary of power in the kingdom of Vaspurakan in dialog with the broader tenth-century Iranian world.

Tracing Sasanian-inspired terms in Bagrationi Georgia would presumably be the most difficult step, given the family's rapprochement with Byzantium. Georgian literature under the early Bagrationi kings exhibits fewer ties to Iranian motifs as the Georgians consciously situated themselves in relation to Byzantium instead of Iran.[126] Indeed, in contrast to the Sasanian motifs of Gagik's apparel, the Bagrationi royal portraits fit in the Byzantine milieu.[127] Yet starting with King Gurgen (r. 994–1008), the Bagrationi kings assumed the title *mep'et'-mep'e*, King of Kings. Sumbat Davit'is-dze clarifies that the assumption of this title reflected the unification of east and west Georgia: "And this Gurgen had a son Bagrat, who was the nephew by his mother to the kings of the Ap'xaz, Demetre and T'eodose. Until the enthronement of Gurgen, Bagrat was king in Ap'xazet'i and therefore Gurgen was called king of kings."[128]

[125] Der Nersessian 1965, 30–1; Jones 2004, 149.
[126] Rapp 2003.
[127] Eastmond 1998.
[128] Rapp 2000, 575–6; Sumbat Davit'is-dze 2003, 362. See also Toumanoff 1961a, 40. For a 1170 charter of Giorgi II with the title *šahanša[h]*, see Garsoïan & Martin-Hisard

Later Bagrationi monarchs, notably David IV Agmašenebeli (r. 1089–1125), Dimitri I (1125–54), and Giorgi III (r. 1156–84), minted coins with the title *malik al-mulūk* and T'amar (r. 1187–1213) followed suit with *malikat al-malikāt*.[129] Brosset correctly dismisses the idea that Arabic-language Georgian coins implied vassalage to the Caliphate or the amīrates of the North. If that were the case, Georgian coins would have followed ʿAbbāsid patterns as we see emanating from Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi and Sharwān in the eleventh century.[130] Brosset instead suggests that Arabic served as a *lingua franca* in Georgia due to the significance of commercial ties with the Islamic world. Karst continues along this track, adding that the bilingual coins were a visible and legalized representation of the amicable relation between Georgia and the Caliphate.[131] Yet both of these arguments assume an exterior motive for the forms of these coins and, besides, by the time Georgian monarchs minted Arabic coins, the caliphs themselves had no power in the North.

A more recent take on the use of Arabic coinage in Georgia, relying on an eminent scholarly tradition of Georgian instead of European numismatists, suggests instead that these inscriptions constituted a "certain denationalization and Arabization, as well as visual dechristianization of the state coinage."[132] Paghava continues with the assertion that these coins claim "a certain *Oriental,* one would say even an *Islamic,* in a sense, appearance."[133] While the aniconic style certainly reflects the norms of the ʿAbbāsid period, whether pulled from the caliphal coins themselves or from local examples minted by the Jaʿfarī *amīr*s or the Sharwānshāhs,[134] it is hard to argue for the dechristianization of coinage that bears the title *ḥusām al-masīḥ,* i.e., sword of the Messiah. The Arabic cannot be understood as solely aesthetic in nature, as if the look of the coin mattered more than the meaning it conveyed.

2012, 56; Rapp 2014, 139–40. See also the discussion on *šaravandedi* in Rapp 1999, 115–16.

129 Lang 1955, 20ff; Langois 1852, 16ff; Paghava 2012; Rapp 1993. Interestingly, this title is attested in the feminine in the Sasanian period in Middle Persian: *mlkt'n mlkt'*; Parthian: *mlkthn mlkth*; Greek: βασίλισσα τῶν βασιλισσῶν, all to render **bānbišnān bānbišn*. It is also found on coins and seals of the Sasanian period. See Benveniste 1966, 27; Rose 1998, 41 and 43; Sundermann, "Bānbišn," *EIr*.

130 Djaparidze 1998; Kouymjian 1969; Lang 1955, 13–16.

131 Karst 1938, 36–7.

132 Paghava 2012, 233.

133 Paghava 2012, 243. Emphasis original.

134 For examples, see Djaparidze 1998; Kouymjian 1969.

Perhaps more important, the title *malik al-mulūk* may indeed be in Arabic, but it is not Islamic *per se*. In claiming this title on their coinage, the Bagrationi kings and queen tapped into Iranian history, manipulating the norms of Iranian numismatics in a way that conveyed Georgian specificity. In this, the Georgian-Sasanian coins described in Chapter 6 are a useful point of comparison. We should not construe the Georgian-Arabic coins minted under the Bagrationi kings and queens as foreign due to the absence of Georgian text or Byzantine-inspired iconography. Rather, we should recognize that these coins represent a Georgian interpretation of a common language of power shared across the Iranian *oikoumene* at this moment. This Iranian heritage is not foreign, but rather embodied in Georgian historical experiences.

These theories available thus far suppose that the Bagrationi coins of the eleventh century are using a foreign language in a show of good faith, instead of participating in a millennia-long discourse with Iranian expressions of power. These coins are not aping Arabic coins of the North to demonstrate good relations with Muslims. Rather, the eleventh- and twelfth-century Georgian coins perpetuate the intermezzo in dialog with the memory of the Sasanians as established by the now-deposed Būyids, whose coins from the earlier eleventh century also bore the title *malik al-mulūk* in Arabic.

We have pushed not only into the tenth century, but even into the eleventh and twelfth, far past the end of caliphal control in the North. But it is important to understand the ramifications of the Iranian intermezzo on historiography. The composition of most of the written sources relevant to the caliphal North and all of the Arabic sources about the Sasanian period took place at the height of the Iranian intermezzo, when the Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian families who controlled the North employed the memory of the Sasanians to formulate contemporary claims to regional power. The comparisons between Sasanian and caliphal North, then, need to take account of the political consequence of writing history as a continuation from Sasanian to ʿAbbāsid rule at a time when local rulers relied on Sasanian signifiers of power.

CONCLUSIONS

Arabic and Armenian sources describe caliphal rule in Armenia and Albania as a continuation of Sasanian norms. This chapter looks at the perception of the local power structure: the foreign governors (the *ostikan* as a new

marzbān), the princes (*išxan Hayocʿ*, *mtʿavar Kʿartʿlisa*, and *Arrānshāh*), and the local nobility (especially the *aḥrār* and *abnāʾ al-mulūk*). By focusing on the titles, roles, and incumbents of these positions, we can see how authors from the tenth century constructed Sasanian legacy to make sense of caliphal and later Iranian rule. At the same time, especially in contemporary sources such as Łewond's Armenian history or the Georgian *Life of the Kings of Kʿartʿli*, we can also see a few elements of actual continuity from Sasanian to caliphal administration: the perpetuation of local posts and titles and the preservation of certain noble families.

Yet the majority of the sources about Sasanian and caliphal rule in the North date to the tenth century. Since the independent kingdoms in Armenia, Georgia, and Albania in the tenth and eleventh centuries also fall under the umbrella of the Iranian intermezzo, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian sources employ Sasanian legacy to make claims to support the power structure in the North. The commonalities between Sasanian and caliphal rule, then, should be seen in light of the prevailing Iranian definitions of power in the North and across the Iranian *oikoumene* at the time of our sources' composition.

5

Caliphs, Commanders, and Catholicoi

Mechanisms to Control the North under Byzantine, Sasanian, and Caliphal Rule

Given the Iranian character of the traditions about the North and the large measure of independence allowed to the Northern élite, it might seem easy to dismiss summarily the idea of an "Umayyad" or an "ʿAbbāsid" North by arguing that caliphal rule was not consistently tied to a specific dynasty. On the one hand, the Caliphate went through periods of decentralization that, compounded with the deeply rooted system of hierarchical power in the North, meant that there were certainly moments when Armenia and Albania had at best a tenuous tie to Damascus or Baghdad. That said, there is concurrently considerable evidence to suggest that both the Umayyad and the ʿAbbāsid caliphs expected to exert direct control over the provinces, especially given the provinces' status as frontiers. Thus the "Umayyad" quality of the Umayyad North is easily demonstrated with the elevation of Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Muḥammad b. Marwān, and Marwān b. Muḥammad as governors of the North. These governors were not only renowned warriors, but also sons of Umayyad caliphs. The ʿAbbāsids followed suit, as future caliphs such as Abū Jaʿfar Manṣūr and Hārūn al-Rashīd served as governors of the North before coming to power.[1]

[1] As we saw in Chapter 4, a number of other ʿAbbāsid heirs or members of the ʿAbbāsid family served as governors of the North. Studies on the *ostikanate* identify many more, but it seems likely that many of these governors-turned-caliphs were only nominally in control of the North. Further, some such as Mahdī do not appear in written sources as governors of the North. The claim that they served as governors relies on numismatic evidence, but we should not assume that coins equate to gubernatorial positions. In some cases, the coins may have been minted in the names of *wālī l-ʿahd* in an effort to make the loyalty of the North apparent further afield. See Marsham 2009, 200.

The goal of this chapter is to examine what we mean by caliphal "rule" in the decentralized North. In particular, it considers whether there are direct ties between how the Sasanian *shāhanshāh*s and the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphs engaged with and exerted control over the local populations across three main strata: the masses, the political élite, and the religious élite. A. Ter-Łevondyan, whose many works remain even today the most reliable studies of Arab–Armenian relations under the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, notes that

> The period of Arab domination in Armenia was characterized by certain traits which distinguish it from the previous Perso-Byzantine era. The natural policy of both the Sasanians and Byzantium toward Armenia was the attempt to bind the country to themselves by various religious and other ties. There was no thought in this period of colonizing Armenia with foreign elements, be they Persian or Greek.... The Arab empire of the Caliphate developed and was organized in a different manner from that of Byzantium or the Sasanians.[2]

While he is certainly correct that Arabs, Persians, and Greeks all interacted with the populations of the North in different ways, this chapter instead considers the common ground between Sasanian and caliphal rule. In the process, we must recognize that the perception of continuity exists even if there is no or scanty reliable evidence for actual ties between pre-Islamic and early Islamic mechanisms of rule. Armenian and Arabic sources lend the impression that Byzantines, Arabs, and Sasanians relied on similar methods of controlling the North. Where Sasanian and caliphal rule are at odds with Byzantine rule, tenth-century historians are typically relying on Sasanian-era sources as models.

THE MASSES AND THE CALIPHATE

We do not have sources that illustrate a sustained and deliberate caliphal policy toward the population of Armenia and Albania, but two main topics recur in contemporary sources to demonstrate caliphal concern for the maintenance of a strong community in the North. Caliphal governors simultaneously discouraged emigration of local populations from the North and, in conjunction, supported the immigration of Arab tribes into the region. Both of these strategies very broadly reflect the perceived or actual continuity of Sasanian practices.

[2] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 19.

Emigration from the North

Several sources suggest demographic shifts as a result of the Islamic incursions and subsequent Marwānid conquests as people fled the North to avoid caliphal rule. This is perhaps more common in Georgian sources than others, such as when Murvan Qru, a curious amalgam of Muḥammad b. Marwān and Marwān b. Muḥammad, arrived in K'art'li and "all the *mt'avaris*, *pitiaxšes*, and the relatives of the *erist'avis* and nobles took refuge in the Caucasus and hid in the forests and caves."[3] These stories tend to refer to the élite who flee to better circumstances, rather than any sort of governmental policy designed to uproot the masses.

The displacement of local populations from eastern Anatolia and their resettlement elsewhere are usually associated with Byzantine policy, most famously under Maurice.[4] Sebēos, for example, witnesses that Maurice (r. 582–602) wrote a letter to Ḵosrow II (r. 590, 591–628), asking him to displace the Armenians to the Sasanian East:

"They [the Armenians] are a perverse and disobedient race, he [Maurice] said; they are between us and cause trouble. Now come, I shall gather mine and send them to Thrace; you gather yours and order them to be taken to the east. If they die, our enemies die; if they kill, they kill our enemies; but we shall live in peace. For if they remain in their own land, we shall have no rest." They both agreed. The emperor began to give orders that they should gather them all and sent them to Thrace. He strongly insisted that the command was carried out. And they began to flee from that region and to submit to the Persians, especially those whose land was under his [Ḵosrow's] authority. He received them all with honours and bestowed on them gifts greater than those of the emperor. Especially when he saw their flight from the emperor, with even greater affection he wished to win them over to himself.[5]

[3] *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* 1996, 241. On Murvan Qru, see Martin-Hisard 1982; Toumanoff 1943, 172. This seems to refer to Marwān b. Muḥammad, who was appointed to the North by Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik. Muḥammad b. Marwān was instead sent to the North either by ʿAbd al-Malik himself or Walīd. The *History* explains that: "Murvan Qru (deaf), son of Momadi; he had been sent by Esim, *amir-mumin* of Baghdad, son of Abdal-Melik', a descendent of Amat'." Esim the son of Abdal-Melik' here sounds closer to Hishām than Walīd.

[4] Ghazarian 1904, 152; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 19; Thopdschian 1904a, 54.

[5] Sebēos 1979, 86–7: Յայնմ ժամանակի թագաւորն Յունաց Մաւրիկ հրամայէ գրել առ թագաւորն Պարսից զիր ամբաստանութեան վասն իշխանացն ամենայն Հայաստանեայց և զաւրաց իւրեանց: "Ազգ մի խոտոր և անհնազանդ են, ասէ, կան ի միջի մերում և պղտորեն: Բայց ե՛կ, ասէ, ես զիմս ժողովեմ և ի Թրակէ գումարեմ. և դու զքոյդ ժողովէ և հրամայէ յԱրևելս տանել: Զի եթէ մեռանին՝ թշնամիք մեռանին. և եթէ սպանանեն՝ զթշնամիս սպանանեն. և մեք կեցցուք խաղաղութեամբ: Զի եթէ դոքա յերկրի իւրեանց լինիցին՝ մեզ հանգչել ոչ լինի": Միաբանեցան երկոքին: Եւ սկսաւ կայսրն հրաման տալ, զի ժողովեսցեն զամենեսեան և ի Թրակէ գումարեսց

This may very well serve as evidence of Armenian antipathy toward Byzantium, as the continuation of the *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* also preserves a conversation between Maurice and Ḵosrow II that is omitted from the Armenian recension. The Georgian version identifies Byzantine interest in the North as a result of common Christian identity, painting a glowing image of Byzantine suzerains pleading to a *shāhanshāh* for protection of the Georgian Christians.[6]

The Armenians met Maurice's plots with uprisings and defection to Sasanian territories.[7] Here Sebēos draws a clear line between how the Byzantines and the Sasanians dealt with the Armenian populations near their borders. According to this account, at least, the Sasanians honored, valued, and engaged the Armenians, while Byzantine emperors saw them as cannon fodder and threats. P. Charanis's landmark studies have examined the resettling of minority populations for military, economic, and cultural reasons under both the Roman and Byzantine Empires, concluding that Maurice "aimed at nothing less than the removal of all Armenians from their homeland."[8] The Byzantines were quite consistent in this policy, and we can easily see its effects in the current demography of the Near East. Byzantium, in its haste to remove Armenian leaders from eastern Anatolia, left the region largely defenseless against the incursions of the Turks in the eleventh century.

Sebēos's account suggests that the Sasanians offered an alternative to Byzantine misrule. His *History* does refer in passing to a group of deportees whom Smbat Bagratuni, known as "the joy of Ḵosrow" (in Armenian: Xosrov š[n]um) and "warrior of the lords" (*teranc' zinuor*, possibly to render the Middle Persian *gund-i-kadag xwadāyag ān framādār armini*)[9] came across in his service of the *shāhanshāh* at the end of the

են. և սաստիկ տագնապէր՝ հրամանն կատարէր: Եւ սկսան փախչել ի կողմանէն յայնմանէ և գալ ի ծառայութիւն Պարսից, մանաւանդ որոց երկիրն ընդ նորա իշխանութեամբ էր: Իսկ նա զամենեսեան ընդունէր մեծարանաւք և մեծամեծ պարգևս քան զկայսր պարգևէր նոցա. մանաւանդ իբր տեսանէր ըզփախուստ նոցա ի կայսերէն՝ ևս առաւել մեծապէս սիրով կամէր զամենեսեան կորզել առ ինքն: See also Sebēos 1979, 105: Եւ հրաման ելանէ ի կայսերէ. "Երեսուն հազար հեծեալ վզենակալ է, ասէ, իմ ի վերայ աշխարհին Հայոց: Արդ՝ ԼՌ երդաւոր ժողովեսցին ինձ անտի և նստուսցին ի Թիրակացւոց աշխարհին": Sebēos 1999, I 31–2.

[6] *History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* 1996, 230–1.

[7] Sebēos 1979, 92: Ապա դարձեալ սկսան միաբանել մնացեալ նախարարքն Հայոց, և խնդրէին ի բաց կալ ի ծառայութենէն Յունաց թագաւորին և նստուցանել իւրեանց թագաւոր, զի մի՛ և նոցա հասցէ մեռանել ի կողմանս Թրակացւոց, այլ կեալ և մեռանել ի վերայ աշխարհին իւրեանց:

[8] Charanis 1961, 141.

[9] McDonough 2016, 237. For the second title, see *Girk' T'łt'oc'* 1901, 149–51 and 168–72 (this is a different edition than the one cited in McDonough's article).

sixth or beginning of the seventh century, but Sebēos does not elaborate on whether they were in fact Armenians or who was responsible for uprooting this particular group.[10] They had lived in Dihistān long enough that they no longer spoke or wrote their language, so the jury is still out, so to speak, on whether this can be understood as a group of deported Armenians or as the result of Sasanian policy. Sebēos is certainly not ruminating on forced emigration under the Sasanians, but instead demonstrates the perceived value of Smbat and his Armenian warriors devoted to the Sasanian cause. This refusal to force the emigration of Armenians seems to be a late Sasanian policy, as Armenian sources on earlier Sasanians suggests that they deported Armenians to the eastern frontier.[11]

While other Armenian and Greek sources preserve records of Armenian emigration from Sasanian to Byzantine territory,[12] these were instigated by the Armenians themselves, to escape Persian rule, and not indicative of a mechanism of rule. The Sasanian-era Armenian sources actually suggest that the Persian officials attempted to stem Armenian emigration westward, presumably to prevent them from establishing a base just across the border. So, for example, Ełišē preserves the order of a Sasanian *shāhanshāh* to restrict the emigration of Albanians, Armenians, and Georgians: "The garrison of the Pass was given strict instructions to allow those who were coming eastwards to us [towards Ctesiphon], but to block the way for those going from the East to the West."[13] As the precursor to Avarayr, this cannot have been typical Sasanian policy, but it indicates the Sasanian attempt to control the élite of the North by managing emigration at times of unrest.

Caliphal policy similarly did not encourage the emigration of the local populations from the North. Again, there were some who left the North, but our sources do not allow us to guess at how large of a movement this involved. They do suggest that the emigrants from the North were typically soldiers and élite, not the masses.[14] For example, the passage seen earlier from the *History of Vaxt'ang Gorgasali*, which specifies that

[10] Sebēos 1979, 96–7. This also appears in Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 72, where he locates the displaced captives near Turkistan in a place called Sagastan. He claims that they relearned their language and converted back to Christianity at the arrival of Smbat.

[11] Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 258-60 has Pērōz I send Armenian cavalry to Hrev; 502 n. 86 identifies Hrev as Herat. See also Garsoïan 1997, 14–15. There are other examples outside of Armenia of the Sasanians moving populations into Iran. See Daryaee 2012, 193: Shāpūr II brought the banū Bakr b. Wa'il into Kirmān and banū Hanzala into Khūzistān; Canepa 2009, 54: Syrian and Cappadocian craftsmen into Fārs and Khūzistān.

[12] Laurent & Canard 1980, 258, n. 21.

[13] Ełišē 1982, 72.

[14] Laurent & Canard 1980, 237–8.

the "*mtʿavaris*, *pitiaxšes*, and the relatives of the *eristʿavis* and nobles" escaped Marwānid control continues along the same lines: "the kings of Kʿartʿli and all their relatives had gone away to Egrisi and from there had passed on to Apʿxazetʿi."[15]

In contrast, we find an eighth-century account of a caliphal governor impeding emigration from the North.[16] Łewond explains that some Armenians attempted to defect to Byzantine territory during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik, but they were hindered by caliphal troops: "Then the Armenian force sent a message to the *tačik* forces, saying 'Why are you intent on pursuing us? What wrong did we commit against you? Behold, our land is before you. We have given you our homes, our vineyards, our forests, and our fields. Now why do you also ask for our lives? Permit us to go from our borders.' But the Ishmaelite forces did not want to listen."[17] While Łewond is implying that the caliphal troops were driven by bloodlust and sought to kill the Armenians for the sake of carnage itself, it is likely that those vineyards and fields could not tend themselves.

Łewond also discusses a caliphal governor of the Umayyad North, Abdlaziz, or ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ḥātim al-Bāhilī, who encouraged Armenian émigrés in Byzantium to return: "When he established his rule, he wrote an edict to the Armenian *naxarar*s and convinced them to return to their own lands."[18] ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz may have intended to deprive Byzantium of allies, and the émigrés did indeed plunder the Byzantine city of Pʿoytʿ (modern: Phasis) and its churches as they made their way back to Armenia. Still, it is likely that the prosperity of the province and the maintenance of the Byzantine and Khazar frontiers were also primary concerns. Without people, the North was much less lucrative and far more vulnerable. While we cannot make any claims about a deliberate attempt to fashion caliphal rule after Sasanian precedents or legacy, we saw earlier that the dual concern of productivity of the land and defense of the frontier forms the basis of provincial rule in Firdowsī's *Shāhnāma*, ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic texts,

[15] *History of Vaxtʿang Gorgasali* 1996, 241.

[16] Grousset 1984, 310 and 338; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a.

[17] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 19r–v: Իսկ զաւրուն հայոց պատգամ յղեալ առ զաւրսն տաճկաց. ընդէ՞ր ասէ պնդեալ գայք զկնի մեր. զի՞նչ ինչ մեղաք ձեզ. ահաւադիկ երկիրտ մեր առաջի ձեր է. ձեզ տուեալ եմք զբնակութիւնս մեր. զայգիս մեր և զանդաս և զանդաստանս մեր. արդ ընդէ՞ր և զանձինս մեր խնդրէք. թոյլ տուք մեզ գնալ ի սահմանաց մերոց. Եւ ոչ կամեցան լսել զաւրքն իսմաելի; Łewond 1857, 45.

[18] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 27r: Եւ իբրև հաստատեցաւ յիշխանութեանն գրէ հրովարտակ առ նախարարս հայոց. և հաւանեցուցանէր զնոսա դառնալ յիւրեանցական աշխարհս; cf: Łewond 1857, 59.

and Sasanian-era Armenian histories alike. This likely explains why Ibn Ḥawqal claims that "the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids had settled them [the Armenians] in their homes" in Armenia.[19]

Immigration to the North

If our sources rarely speak of forced emigration of local populations under Sasanian and caliphal rule, they do reveal a clear concern for settlement of Arab Muslims in the North. The effort to populate the North with Arab tribes was the result of a number of historical factors. First, the area retained its significance as a *thaghr* against both Byzantium and Khazaria. We find Arab settlement in Armenia mainly in the west, around Lake Van and Qālīqalā/Karin, placing the Arabs in close proximity to the Byzantine frontier, whereas the Arab settlements in Albania, such as Bardhʿa/Partaw, are centered near the base camps for expeditions against the Khazars and Ṣanāriyya.[20] Second, we can explain Arab immigration as an indicator of the weakness of caliphal governors of the North compounded by the lingering independence of the local nobility and presiding princes. The Jazarī governors, not the caliphs, initiated Arab settlement, which explains why the Arab immigrants tended to be from the same tribe as the governor. They came to support the local Arab government, a foreign and largely decentralized system in a land with ardently independent nobility.[21] Finally, settlement in the North provided tribes with more land and, further, supported the governors' goal to maintain the economic profit of the province.[22]

By far the most valuable study of the movement of Arab tribes into the North is A. Ter-Łevondyan's *Arabakan amirayut'yunnerə Bagratunyac' Hayastanum* (1965), translated into English as *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia* (1976) and into Arabic as *Al-Imārāt al-ʿarabiyya fī Armīniyya l-Baqrādūniyya* (2003). He argues that "[f]rom the very beginning, the pan-Muslim ʿAbbāsid Caliphate used radical means to weaken the power of the Armenian *naxarar*s."[23] Ter-Łevondyan links the demographic shift to the emigration of local nobility into Byzantine territories,

[19] Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 245: وكانوا بنو أميَّة وبنو العبّاس قد أقرُّوهم على سكناتهم ويقبضون الرسوم عليهم من جبایاتهم
[20] Madelung 1975, 227; Nicol 1979, 85; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 25 and 29.
[21] Nicol 1979, 85.
[22] Nicol 1979, 86.
[23] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 21.

to the need to keep the local nobility in line, especially after the Armenian rebellion in 775, as well as to the importance of sustaining the frontier.

We need to reexamine the examples of Armenian emigration. Ter-Łevondyan relies here on Łewond's account seen previously, when ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz convinced the Armenians to return. It is likely that many Armenians did leave their land, but it is not clear how many, or if this emigration resulted in large-scale demographic shifts. While Ter-Łevondyan also cites Łewond to the effect that "many of their own free will abandoned their fields and flocks and fled,"[24] this may be seen in the context of avoiding *kharāj* (land taxation) and cannot be coopted into an argument on Armenian emigration from Armenia because it may instead relate to urbanization and the abandonment of agricultural land. The lack of strong evidence for debilitating emigration from the North hints that the strongest impetus for Arab settlement was most importantly the maintenance of the *thughūr* and not replacing or controlling the local power structure. Łewond, for example, explains that Yazīd b. Usayd al-Sulamī "had men from the sons of Ishmael settle in it [Qālīqalā/Karin] with their families to guard the city and defend it from the enemies."[25]

Arabic sources add further evidence that Arab settlement in the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods intended to bolster the frontier in both Albania (particularly, Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband)[26] and Armenia.[27] When Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik expelled the Khazars from Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband during Hishām's (r. 724–43) struggles to keep the North, he also settled 24,000 troops there to maintain the city.[28] Yaʿqūbī's ninth-century *History*, for another example, confirms the involvement of Hārūn al-Rashīd and, specifically, his local Sulamī governor, in settling Arabs from Jazīra into the North:

> Rashīd appointed (as *ostikan*) Yūsuf b. Rāshid al-Sulamī in place of Khuzayma b. Khāzim. He transplanted a mass of Nizārīs to this land, and (until then) the Yemenites had formed a majority in Armenia, but in the days of Yūsuf, the Nizārīs

[24] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 33.

[25] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 97r: և ածեալ արս յորդոցն իսմաելի բնակեցոյց ի նմա՝ նոցին ընդանեաւք. պահել զքաղաքն և զգուշանալ ի թշնամեացն; cf: Łewond 1857, 161.

[26] Minorsky 1958, 91. Manṣūr settled 7,000 men in Darband, according to Yaʿqūbī.

[27] Under Yazīd b. Mazyad (r. 788–9), see Nalbandyan 1958, 114; Nicol 1979, 100–1. Under ʿAbd al-Kabīr (r. 791/2), see Nalbandyan 1958, 114–15; Nicol 1979, 101–2.

[28] Blankinship 1994, 152; Bobrovnikov 2006, 39; Minorsky 1958, 90-1, citing Balādhurī and Balʿamī: "According to the Derbend-nâmeh…in the year 115/733 Maslama divided Darband into seven streets, each with a mosque, and called them after the origin of the settlers in each of them (Filisṭīn, Dimishq, Ḥimṣ, Jazā'ir, Mauṣil, etc)."

increased in number. Then he (Hārūn al-Rashīd) named Yazīd b. Mazyad b. Zāʾida l-Shaybānī, and he brought from every side so many of the Rabīʿa that they now form a majority, and he controlled the land so strictly that no one dared move in it. After him came ʿAbd al-Kabīr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥāmid who was from the house of Zayd b. Khaṭṭāb al-ʿAdawī, whose home was Ḥarrān. He came with a multitude of men from the Diyār Muḍar, stayed only four months and left.[29]

Several Arab governors of the North held the *nisba* al-Sulamī, indicating their belonging to the Sulaym tribe, a subgroup of the Muḍar. Examples include the Jaḥḥāfids, as well as Yazīd b. Usayd (752–4, 759–70, and 775–80), Yūsuf b. Rāshid (787), Khālid b. Yazīd b. Usayd (794), Aḥmad b. Yazīd b. Usayd (796–7), and ʿAbd al-Aʿlāʾ b. Aḥmad b. Yazīd (825–6 and 829).[30] Banū Sulaym were directly linked to the wars against Byzantium, as one of the earliest conquerors of the North was Ṣafwān b. Muʿaṭṭal al-Sulamī and Yaqẓān b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlāʾ l-Sulamī fought in campaigns against the Greeks.[31] The role of banū Sulaym in bringing in Arab settlers therefore supports the argument that the Arabization of the North aimed to strengthen the frontier.

As we saw earlier, Ter-Łevondyan sees the Arabization of Armenia as something entirely foreign to Sasanian and Byzantine rule in the North. Others, such as M. Canard, have followed suit: "Mais ni les Perses, ni les Byzantins n'avaient songé à s'implanter en Arménie. Avec les Arabes, par contre, il y eut un peuplement arabe assez important."[32] Yet if we see the immigration of tribes affiliated with the caliphal governors into the North as an effort to sustain the frontier instead of an attempt to temper the power of the local nobility, we have comparable examples of this technique in the Sasanian period.

Balādhurī explains the Georgian toponym *Sagodebeli* based on Anūshirwān's attempts to settle the North. The *shāhanshāh* built a city in Jurzān and populated it with Sogdians and Persians. The Arabic name Ṣughdabīl therefore refers to the settlers from Ṣughd, i.e., Sogdiana.[33]

[29] Yaʿqūbī, qtd. Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 31. NB: I have changed the transcription of the names to properly reflect the Arabic. Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 515: ثم ولّى الرشيد يوسف بن راشد السلميّ مكان خزيمة بن خازم فنقل الى بلد جماعة من النزاريّة وكان الغالب على ارمينية اليمانية فكثرت النزاريّة في ايّام يوسف ثمّ ولّى يزيد بن مزيد بن زائدة الشيبانيّ فنقل اليها ربيعة من كلّ ناحية حتّى هم اليوم الغالبون عليها وضبط البلد اشدّ ضبط حتّى لم يكن به أحد يتحرّك ثمّ ولّى عبد الكبير بن عبد الحميد [من] ولد زيد بن الخطاب العدويّ وكان منزله حرّان فصار اليها في جماعة من اهل ديار مضر ولم يقم الّا اربعة أشهر حتى صرف

[30] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 30.

[31] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 30. Again, I have corrected the spelling of the name Yaqẓān to reflect the Arabic.

[32] Laurent & Canard 1980, 198.

[33] Balādhurī 1886, 195.

This is clearly an ʿAbbāsid-era attempt to assign meaning to a Georgian toponym, as *Sagodebeli* in fact means "place of mourning" and refers to a cemetery in Georgian. This was where the body of Habo of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi was laid after his martyrdom in 786: Christians brought Habo's body "up to the spot which is called the Place of Lamentation [Sagodebeli] – for it is there that the burial ground of the people of this town is situated … on that spot which is to the east of the city fortress which they call Sadilego ('the Dungeon')."[34] Yet the transfer from Georgian to Arabic is also interesting, as Minorsky identifies the suffix *-bēl*/*-bīl* as evidence that the popular etymology of the toponym is not only Iranian, but "probablement sāsānide."[35] Minorsky's suggestion relies on the assumption that the area was in fact called Sagodebeli during the Sasanian period, instead of coined as such in reference to the mourning of Habo's supporters in the eighth century. There are other reports of Sasanian settlement in the North that are not imbued with such polemical promise, including some that preserve Middle Persian vocabulary.

Masʿūdī, making an explicit comparison between the North and the East, notes that "when Anushirwan built the town known as al-Bāb with its wall protruding into the sea, and extending over the land and mountains, he settled there various nations and kings for whom he fixed ranks and special titles and defined their frontiers, on the pattern of what Ardashīr b. Bābak had done with regards to the kings of Khorasan."[36] Anūshirwān's wall at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband constituted a claim for the northern frontier. Like the traditions about Ṣughdabīl/Sagodebeli, this tradition demonstrates the perceived connection between the North and the East under Sasanian rule, as it was remembered in the ʿAbbāsid period.

Yet the Sasanian-led settlement in the North is unlikely to prove an ʿAbbāsid-era construct. The Sasanian presence was made visible not just with barriers, but also with the settlement of Siyāsījiyya in the North. Balādhurī claims that Anūshirwān settled Siyāsījiyya in the Armenian areas

[34] Schultze 1905, 35: Sagodebeli appears as Ort des Weinens and Sadilego, Gefängnisplatz; Lang 1956, 131.

[35] Minorsky 1930, 73; see also 63: "L'étymologie populaire interprétait Sa-godeb-eli comme Soġda-bel, dans le sens vague de 'lieu habité de Soġdiens'. Or quelle pouvait être la valeur réelle de cet élément *-bel*, dont la pronunciation (avec *e*) est tout d'abord confirmée par l'original géorgien? Les Arabes et avant eux probablement les Sāsānides, devaient penser à l'élément *bēl*/*bīl* qu'on trouve à la fin de certains noms de localités de l'Iran et de sa périphérie."

[36] Masʿūdī 1958, 144; Masʿūdī 1861, II 3–4: لما بنى انوشروان هذه المدينة المعروفة بالباب والابواب والسور في البرّ والبحر والجبل اسكن هناك اممًا من الناس وملوكا وجعل لهم مراتب ووسم كلّ ملك باسمه وحدّ له حدّاً على حسب فعل اردشير بن بابك حين رتب ملوك خراسان.

of Nashawā/Naxčawan and Dabīl/Duin, in Sīsajān/Siwnikʿ, and in Albania at Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. Modern scholarship has struggled to identify definitively the Siyāsījiyya. They appear unpointed as al-Sāsījīn (الساسحس) and also partially pointed as al-Nasāsījīn (النساسيجس) in the ninth-century history of Balādhurī; unpointed as al-Sāsijīn (الساسحس) in Qudāma b. Jaʿfar's tenth-century geography; pointed as al-Siyāyija (السيايجة) in the modern edition of Masʿūdī's geography; partially pointed as Nashāstijiya (نشاستحيه) or unpointed as al-Āsnāsīkīn (الاسناسكس) in Ibn al-Faqīh's tenth-century geography; as well as in a variety of renditions in later Arabic works such as those by Yāqūt and Ibn al-Athīr.[37]

Citing St. Martin's description of Sīsajān/Siwnikʿ, which relies on the history of Movsēs Xorenacʿi, M. J. de Goeje concludes that "est populus cujus genealogiae princips appellatur *Sisag*."[38] De Goeje's identification is suspect, though, because his manuscripts did not agree one with the next and, additionally, they were not pointed, so the similarity to the word *Sīsajān* was constructed based on de Goeje's own expectations. J. Laurent, J. Markwart, and H. Hübschmann agree with de Goeje's reading,[39] although Markwart also published an alternate version: this should appear as *sabāsījiyya* (سباسيجية) or *sabāsījūn* (سباسيجون) to render the Middle Persian *spāsīgān* and should be translated as "Diensleute."[40]

In an insightful article entitled "Military Colonization of the Caucasus and Armenia under the Sassanids" (1937), J. Kramers convincingly outlines a number of difficulties concerning both de Goeje's and Markwart's suggestions and instead establishes another etymology from Middle Persian that is much more likely. He specifies how we should understand the unpointed variants in extant manuscripts: السساسحس should be read as *al-nashāstijīn* (النشاستجين); الاساسكس, as *al-anshāstikīn* (الانشاستكين); and سساسحيه, as *nashāsitjiya* (نشاستجيه).

> The word would render then an [A]rabicized plural of [M]iddle Persian *nišāstaq*, belonging to the middle Persian verb *nišāstan*, the causative form of *nišastan*.... The meaning would be "someone who has been made to dwell in a certain place" and, in a pregnant sense, a "garrisoned warrior." The Arabic verb اسكن used in the first passage of al-Balāḏurī is the exact counterpart of *nišāstan* in this sense. This interpretation is much more obvious than that of Sisakians, because an Arabic

[37] Kramers 1937.
[38] Baladhuri 1866, 194, n. f.; Kramers 1937, 614.
[39] Kramers 1937, 615; Laurent & Canard 1980, 139 and 165, n. 190; Markwart 1901, 120; Minorsky 1958, 14, n. 2.
[40] Kramers 1937, 617.

plural derived from سيسجان would yield سياسجة and the addition of the ending *–ūn* or *–īn* would be abnormal in the highest degree.[41]

Balādhurī's Siyāsījiyya should therefore read Nashāsitjiyya, Persians settled in Armenia and Albania to support the frontier under Anūshirwān.

Modern scholars recently attempted to bring de Goeje's rendering of Siyāsījiyya as the people of Sīsajān/Siwnik' into the discussion on the Sayābija.[42] Yet the Sayābija, a Sumatran or Indian group who served in the Sasanian army, cannot possibly refer to the Siyāsījiyya, who appear instead to be Persians. Ibn al-Faqīh's geography states that Anūshirwān "made in this of seven farsaḫs distance [between Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband and the mountains] seven passages; each one of these was dominated by a town, in which he had placed *Persian* [emphasis added] warriors named al-Siyāsīkīn."[43] Additionally, Masʿūdī calls them *al-jund al-ʿājim*, or "the foreign regiment," and the word *ʿajam* typically appears in Arabic sources to refer to Persians.[44]

The immigration of Persian settlers during the Sasanian period replicates the impetus, viz. the maintenance of the frontier, of Arabization in the North in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods, even if it becomes the prerogative of the Sasanian *shāhanshāh* himself instead of the local governor. Anūshirwān's settlement of Nashāsitjiyya in the North constituted an attempt to build the frontiers, both physically with the construction of walls and cities and socially with the settlement of a population loyal to the Sasanian Empire.

This neatly parallels caliphal policy, although Ter-Łevondyan points out that these same Arabic sources, notably Balādhurī, portray Greek policy in very different terms. He argues that "the aim of the Greeks was merely to create a ruined neutral zone which would separate and isolate them from their dangerous adversary, while the Arabs sought to turn the castles and fortresses built by them in this area into bases for perpetual attacks against the Byzantine Empire."[45] Here Balādhurī at

[41] Kramers 1937, 616; Zakeri 1995, 123.

[42] Eger 2015, 367, n. 83; Zakeri 1995, 123. On the Sayābija, see al-Qāḍī 2016; ʿAthamina 1998; Morony 1984, 271–2.

[43] Ibn al-Faqīh qtd. Kramers 1937, 615; Ibn al-Faqīh 1885, 291: وجعل فى هذه السبعة فراسخ سبعة مسالك على كلّ مسلك منها مدينة قد رتّب فيها قوم من المقاتلة من الفرس يقال لهم السياسيكين. Yāqūt's *Muʿjam al-buldān* includes this passage nearly verbatim, but with الانشاستكين. Kramers notes that the manuscripts of Ibn al-Faqīh support this same reading as الانشاستكين, but the modern printed edition of the text was edited by de Goeje, who chose to render it as السياسيكين in order to match his reading of Balādhurī.

[44] Laurent & Canard 1980, 70, n. 126.

[45] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 23.

least describes Sasanian techniques to fortify the frontier as very different from Byzantine goals and, simultaneously, exactly like caliphal policy. Balādhurī has the caliphs and their representatives, like Anūshirwān and unlike the Byzantine emperors, build the cities of the frontier and import populations to maintain them.

Caliphal strategies for dealing with the local populations of the North thus exhibit a few general tendencies. First, the encouragement of Arab immigration into the North and the discouragement of emigration are both policies spearheaded by the local caliphal governors. In this, the placement of the frontier is paramount, as the governors' main objective was the protection of caliphal territory. This supports the general view of decentralized power in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods. Our sources for both policies support the perception that caliphal strategies were comparable to Sasanian instead of Byzantine policies, with the juxtaposition of Byzantine vs. Sasanian rule explicit in Sebēos's text about the forced emigration and resettlement of the Armenian population.

We have no reference to Anūshirwān's settlement of Persian populations in Sasanian-era Armenian sources, which, should such evidence exist, might lend weight to an argument for actual continuity of policy from Sasanian to caliphal rule. In fact, Balādhurī's attribution of this policy to none other than Anūshirwān may suggest that its inclusion was based on the legacy of a near-legendary Sasanian figure.[46] For the most part, the caliphal governors and not the caliphs encouraged the immigration of Arab tribes, so bringing Anūshirwān into the story might suggest that we are not dealing with actual continuity. However, the preservation of a *khabar* with Middle Persian vocabulary indicates that Balādhurī's source for this material may well be Sasanian, leaving any possible conclusion about continuity tentative. Even while the original source may have been Persian, even Sasanian, its inclusion here indicates that the Persian settlement of Armenia and Albania was relevant to a late ninth-century audience, or Balādhurī would not have included it.

THE LOCAL POLITICAL ÉLITE

Beyond the support for immigration and the discouragement of emigration, both policies with the potential for large demographic shifts, most of the mechanisms of rule in the caliphal North relate instead to the

[46] See Rubin 1995, 227, on "a general tendency to eulogize and idealize Khusro as the model king" in Arabic and Persian sources.

political élite. Most of our sources, whether in Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, or Greek, support the view that the *naxarar*s vacillated between Byzantine and caliphal rule depending on which power allowed the preservation of the *naxarar*s' own interests at any given time. Should we wish to write a history of the North *wie es eigentlich gewesen* in the eighth and ninth centuries, Realpolitik would likely serve as a convenient organizational node. However, the goal here is to evaluate the perception of the relationship between the caliphs and the local élite in the North. In this, Armenian sources especially project a certain degree of continuity between Sasanian and caliphal rule, even if all three powers relied on similar techniques to control the *naxarar*s.

Common Ground between Sasanian, Byzantine, and Caliphal Rule

Despite Ter-Łevondyan's assertion that caliphal rule can be differentiated from Sasanian and Byzantine rule in the North, we can draw a number of similarities between the rule of Constantinople, Ctesiphon, Damascus, and Baghdad. For example, we have considerable information about Armenian and Albanian hostages in both Arabic and Armenian sources. It seems very likely that all three empires kept family members of powerful nobles in their respective courts with the expectation that their lives depended on their submission and the payment of tribute or taxes. So, as an example, in 421 a Georgian prince and future martyr was sent to Theodosius "since his father Bosmarios valued the friendship of the Romans as Christians more highly than that of the godless Persians."[47]

Sebēos notes the names of the *naxarar*s kept in the court of Ḵosrow II and, later, explains that Mušeł Mamikonean could not fight against the caliphal army because they held four of his sons captive in Syria.[48] Drasxanakertc'i claims that 1775 hostages were executed when Armenia rebelled during the first *fitna*.[49] Dasxuranc'i notes that the Albanian prince Varaz-Trdat had three of his sons held hostage in Constantinople in the seventh century, while this same author identifies both Armenian and Albanian princes held as captives in ninth-century Baghdad.[50] It is

[47] Lang 1956, 59–60.
[48] Sebēos 1979, 94 and 175.
[49] Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 92. He claims that this was on the order of an unnamed caliph, and that the execution took place immediately before the ascension of Mu'āwiya.
[50] Dasxuranc'i 1983, 311 and 332.

therefore hard to draw a clear line between the practices of any of the three empires and their relationship with the élite.

Another example of this is the much-celebrated Armenian access to the *shāhanshāh*. As a response to the fifth-century Armenian wars, the Armenians gained the right to approach the Sasanian monarch without first going to his representative, the *marzbān*, in the North. Łazar P'arpec'i stresses that the Armenians wanted the *shāhanshāh* to see and hear them himself in order to promote fairness, which in turn would ensure the productivity of the land.[51] Sebēos and Drasxanakertc'i have Vahan Mamikonean approach the *shāhanshāh* Kavād I in the Sasanian court shortly thereafter.[52] The Armenians had direct access to the caliphs despite the presence of caliphal governors in the North. Łewond records the arrival of Ašot Bagratuni before Marwān b. Muḥammad and Dasxuranc'i records a correspondence that, he purports, was exchanged between the Armenians and ʿAbd al-Malik. We will return to these examples shortly, but here it suffices to point out that we have no clear indication that the relationship between the *naxarar*s and the caliph was in any way derivative of the comparable relationship with the *shāhanshāh*. Łewond, for one, also refers several times to Armenian gifts and missives meant for the Byzantine emperor, especially in the Sufyānid period.

The caliphs exercised their rule through a number of different methods that were frequently reminiscent of the modus operandi of both the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, all while engaging with Arab traditions, caliphal precedents, and Islamic expectations.[53] Like their recognition of the presiding princes, this demonstrates that caliphal rule was a new reworking of Near Eastern authority and did not appear *ex nihilo* as a continuation of Sasanian rule. That said, there are also indications that Armenians perceived the caliphs' interactions with the *naxarar*s in the same light as their Sasanian predecessors. Again, Sasanian legacy may outweigh Sasanian antecedents. Specifically, Armenian sources charge both the Persians and the Arabs with destabilizing the Armenian power structure and thereby profiting from the decentralized nature of society in the North.

[51] Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 390.

[52] Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 64; Sebēos 1979, 67.

[53] See, for example, Kosto 2012, 4: "Although hostages are absent from the Qurʾan, there is ample evidence that Islamic traditions surrounding hostageship absorbed not simply Roman and Persian antecedents, but also those of pre-Islamic Arabia."

Encouraging Disunity among the Nobles

The *naxarar* families, trained by both tradition and geography, were accustomed to independent rule and were not always able to overcome their differences to join forces against a common foe.[54] Playing one house against the other allowed Ctesiphon, Damascus, and Baghdad to profit from the natural fissures in the local sociopolitical hierarchy. The *naxarar*s jealously guarded their independence one from the another, joining forces only when their individual houses faced specific threats. The unit of loyalty was regionally defined around the *naxarar* family, not the more abstract idea of a nation or the Church.[55] The decentralized nature of society, coupled with troublesome inheritance traditions that tended to support fragmentation,[56] meant that the most pragmatic approach for both the Sasanian *shāhanshāh*s and the caliphs alike was to alternate their support for different families.

Here the Armenian expression of unity mirrors the expectation in Islamic political and religious ideology. Even or especially in times of fragmentation, Arabic and Armenian texts alike reveal the aspiration for political, religious, and societal unity. The unity among *naxarar* houses, cast in strongly religious terms, is a main theme in Ełišē's fifth-century *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* about the Sasanian attempts to spread Zoroastrianism in the North. He repeatedly calls the agreement of the nobles fighting against the Sasanians a covenant (*uxt*) and frequently defines the unifying factor as the Church. Ełišē's history is replete with complaints that the Sasanians took advantage of the decentralized *naxarar* system to gain the upper hand: "By slander he [the Sasanian *shāhanshāh*] pitted the nobility against each other, and caused dissention in every family. He did this in the hope of breaking their unity."[57] Specifically, Ełišē laments that the *shāhanshāh* "began to give precedence to the junior over the senior, to the unworthy over the honorable, to the ignorant over the knowledgeable, to the cowards over the brave. Why should I enumerate the details? All the unworthy he promoted and all the worthy he demoted, until he had split father and son from each other."[58]

[54] Laurent & Canard 1980, 28; Thopdschian 1904a, 50.

[55] Adontz 1970, 166; Laurent & Canard 1980, 101.

[56] Laurent & Canard 1980, 136.

[57] Ełišē 1982, 76; Garsoïan 2004c, 99. Ełišē 1989, 46: զնախարարեանն բանսարկութեամբ արկ ընդ միմեանս, և յամենայն տան արար խռովութիւն: Եւ զայդ՝ ամենայն առնէր՝ թերևս զմիաբանութիւնն քակեսցէ.

[58] Ełišē 1982, 70; Ełišē 1989, 32: սկսաւ այնուհետև յառաջ կոչել զկրսերս յաւագաց և զանարգս ի պատուականաց և զտգէտս ի գիտնոց և զանարիս ի քաջ արանց, և

This disunity, so advantageous to imperial ambitions of the Sasanian kings and ʿAbbāsid caliphs alike, was unsurprisingly also explicitly attested concerning the period of caliphal rule in T‘ovma Arcruni’s tenth-century *History of the Arcruni House*:[59]

In this way, the unity of our land was destroyed little by little and men each thought evil of his friend and brother. And they sent letters and envoys, kept secret from one another, to the king. But among themselves they spread words of slander and no one, not even a single pair, remained in agreement. And they made their enemies very happy with the destruction of their unity.[60]

T‘ovma specifically claims that the tax collector, Apusēt‘, or Abū Saʿīd Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Marwazī, intended “by some deceitful trickery they might be able to dispossess them of each of their principalities. However, when he [Apusēt‘] realized the indissoluble unity of the mutual pact between Ašot and Bagarat, he in no way revealed the wicked plans that they were plotting against them [the Armenians], but merely indicated that the reason for his coming concerned taxes and other administrative matters.”[61] Other tenth-century historians such as Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc‘i note that the disunity of the *naxarar*s allowed the success of the caliphal army, but they do not expect that caliphal representatives actively cultivated this disunity.[62] The unity of the *naxarar* families is consistently upheld as the only possibility to thwart the designs of the center. However, this unity was in fact fleeting at best. Soon after discussing this “mutual pact” among the Armenian *naxarar*s, Vasak Arcruni stood before the caliph with a list of accusations against Ašot.[63]

զի՞ մի մի թուիցեմ, այլ զամենայն զանարժանսն յառաջ մատուցանէր և զամենայն զարժանաւորսն յետս տանէր. մինչև զհայր և զորդի քակէր ի միմեանց:

[59] Laurent & Canard 1980, 102.

[60] T‘ovma Arcruni 1985b, 194: Այսպէս տակաւին ի բազումս քայքայեալ լինէր միաբանութիւն աշխարհիս, և իւրաքանչիւր ոք այր զընկերէ և զեղբօրէ իւրմէ ի չարիս խոկային: Եւ թուղթս և դեսպանս առ թագաւորն յղէին ծածուկս ի միմեանց. այլ և ընդ միմեանս արկանէին բանս քաւութեան, և ոչ ոք մնայր գէթ երկու ի միասին. և յոյժ ուրախ առնէին զթշնամիսն ի քակել միաբանութեան իրերաց:

[61] T‘ovma Arcruni 1985a, 174–5 and 174, n. 5, 1985b, 170 and 172: Բայց նոքա ի մտի եդեալ էին, թերևս պատիր խաբէութեամբ կարասցեն բառնալ զնոսա յիւրաքանչիւր տէրութենէ: Իսկ իբրև ծանուցաւ նմա անլոյծ միաբանութիւն ուխտի ընդ միմեանս Աշոտոյ և Բագարատայ՝ ոչ ինչ յայտնեաց զխորհուրդս չարութեանն, զոր խորհեալ էին ի վերայ նոցա. բայց միայն զհարկաց և զայլ հոգաբարձութենէ ծանուցանէ զպատճառ գալստեանն: See Laurent & Canard 1980, 137.

[62] Drasxanakertc‘i 1996, 84.

[63] T‘ovma Arcruni 1985a, 180.

We cannot necessarily attribute the concern about threats to Armenian unity entirely to T‘ovma’s literary debt to Ełišē’s *History*, where ʿAbbāsid-era details are grafted onto Sasanian stories. Łewond’s history, the only Armenian text to survive from the period of caliphal control in the North, suggests that the caliphal representatives may have explicitly harnessed disunity and distrust by favoring one family over another. He writes at length about the rivalry between the Bagratuni and Mamikonean families, which reached the point where the *Išxan Hayoc‘* Ašot Bagratuni traveled to Syria to complain to the caliph in Syria, where he stumbled upon Marwān b. Muḥammad’s army in the midst of the third *fitna*. At least according to Łewond, Armenian troops provided the turning point that ensured Marwān’s rise to power and, in return, the new caliph supported Ašot’s claim over the other Armenian *naxarar*s. Unaware of all of these negotiations, the caliphal governor in Dabīl/Duin, Isahak, or Isḥāq b. Muslim al-ʿUqaylī, had appointed Grigor Mamikonean as *Išxan Hayoc‘*. Marwān intervened, ordering the execution of Dawit‘ Mamikonean, Grigor’s brother, for conspiring against the Bagratunis. Grigor continued to threaten the primacy of Bagratuni power, culminating in the blinding of Ašot, henceforth known as “the Blind,” by his order: “From then on the glory (Armenian: *p‘aṙk‘*; Middle Persian: *farrah*) of the Armenian people was removed.”[64]

This example from Łewond’s history demonstrates that the *naxarar*s, far from presenting a unified force, turned to leaders both in the caliphal North and in the center of the Caliphate to provide the upper hand in internal disputes and, further, that the interests of the caliphal governors of the North were not necessarily in line with the expectations of the caliph himself.[65] It remains to be demonstrated, though, if this constitutes an explicit stratagem. T‘ovma repeatedly observes that the Arabs would not admit to what, to him, was clearly a deliberate and intentional policy to play one *naxarar* house off of the other.[66] In the end, the only explicit reference to caliphal representatives supporting their rule by fostering disunity within the Armenian ranks comes from T‘ovma, whose

[64] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 92r: և յայսմհետէ բառնայր փառք ազգիս հայոց; Łewond 1857, 155. For a summary of this, see Ghazarian 1904, 185–6.

[65] Cf. Robinson 2000, 158: “[T]he parties negotiating the city’s position in the empire were three (caliphs, governors and city élite), rather than two (the state and the city élite).… Governors’ horizons were presumably low and short term; as far as the caliphs were concerned, the long-term future clearly lay in a political symbiosis between province and empire, one in which local élites had a role to play.”

[66] See, for example, T‘ovma Arcruni 1985a, 175.

rhetorical debt to Ełišē's theologically driven fixation on unity we have seen elsewhere.[67] This suggests that T'ovma's certainty that caliphal policy intentionally drove a fissure between the local élite is in fact dependent on Ełišē's complaints about Yazdegerd's reign. In short, tenth-century Armenian descriptions of caliphal rule are again based on the description of Sasanian rule in Sasanian-era Armenian texts.

While it is logical to expect that the Persians, Greeks, and Arabs all played one *naxarar* family against the other, only our Armenian sources substantiate this explicitly and this appears in the context of comparisons between Sasanian and caliphal rule. It seems that this was just the most efficacious way for any empire to deal with a powerful if fragmented political élite. As a point of comparison, the Georgian *Book of K'art'li* presents the "treacherous rivalry" between the nobles of K'art'li as merely customary.[68] Whereas T'ovma sees the cultivation of disunity to be caliphal policy to ensure the weakness of Armenian power structure, later Georgian sources use the same set of concerns to vaunt the perceptions of the Bagrationi King of Kings David Agmašenebeli (r. 1089–1125). The same criticism was leveled against him, namely, that "One person he would love and one he would promote, yet another he would hate and abase; this one he would elevate and this one bring low." Yet instead of disparaging David, Georgian historians explained this as a natural policy for a monarch because "the race of Georgians has been disloyal to its lords from the very beginning … If the king honours the loyal, the prudent, and the valiant instead of the disloyal, the cowards, and the unworthy, what injustice has he done?"[69]

It seems likely that the Sasanian *shāhanshāh*, Byzantine emperors, and Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphs alike supported the presiding princes in order to impose a single authoritative voice in the region, thus favoring a single leader over the population instead of purposefully exacerbating disunity. The two approaches are not necessarily conflicting, though, because their choices in assigning the position to a particular individual revealed the rival claimants to power.

THE RELIGIOUS ÉLITE

Given the social and political disunity in the North, we cannot offer a single Armenian or Albanian leader able to respond to and engage with the

[67] See Chapter 4.
[68] *Book of K'art'li* 1996, 274.
[69] *The History of David, King of Kings* 1996, 349–50.

caliphs or even the caliphal governors as a representative of all Armenians or all Albanians. In the absence of a local leader capable of speaking on behalf of the local population in the North, we find a few examples to suggest that the Church leaders acted in this capacity as envoys and representatives.[70]

The most famous example appears in Łewond's history, which describes the execution of 280 warriors from the Umayyad army at Warthān/Vardanakert on the order of the Armenian *naxarar*s in 703. In response, ʿAbd al-Malik sent his brother Muḥammad b. Marwān to reestablish caliphal rule in the province. The *naxarar*s, in an attempt to forestall reprisal for the execution of caliphal troops, sent the catholicos Sahak to Ḥarrān/Xaṙan to offer the submission and obedience of the Armenians. Although Sahak died before meeting Muḥammad, the commander was so moved by Sahak's last words, written to him to beg for clemency for the Armenian people, that Muḥammad sent an oath to the *naxarar*s to promise clemency. Łewond records with some incredulity that when Muḥammad b. Marwān arrived in Armenia, "he did not even pay heed to the misfortunes that befell the *tačik* forces in the village of Vardanakert."[71]

Another famous example of an encounter between an Armenian catholicos and an Umayyad caliph is Yovhannēs Awjnecʿi's meeting with ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, a tale only found in later Armenian sources. When ʿUmar questioned the material extravagancies of the Church, Awjnecʿi reportedly undressed to reveal that under the sumptuous gowns of his office, he wore the rough garb of an ascetic against his skin.[72]

We find similar stories of Armenian catholicoi and priests appearing before Byzantine and Sasanian emperors, as well, such as Movsēs Xorenacʿi's account of Sahak Partʿew ("the Parthian") approaching the *shāhanshāh*.[73] The hierarchy of the Armenian Church played a political role in navigating between the concerns of the *naxarar*s, local governors, and emperors.[74] As such, caliphal engagement with the Church and allowance of Christianity in the North can be seen as another mechanism of

[70] Mahé 1997b, 99–100.

[71] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 24r: և ոչ ինչ չարեաց յուշ լինէր վասն անցիցն որ էանց ընդ զուրն տաճկաց ի վարդանակերտն աւանի;Łewond 1857, 52–4. Drasxanakertcʿi reports this same story, although Sahak goes to Ogbay instead of Muḥammad b. Marwān.

[72] Mahé 1997a, 65.

[73] Garsoïan 1994, 124.

[74] Garsoïan 1974; Ghazarian 1904, 200–1.

rule. This, like caliphal strategies to deal with the *naxarar*s, demonstrates close ties to both Byzantine and Sasanian practices. Local norms persist whether under Greek, Persian, or Arab rule. Yet in order to uncover the commonalities between Byzantine and caliphal rule in the North, we rely on foreign sources; in Armenian sources, caliphal policies consistently appear closer to Sasanian antecedents.

Ancestral Customs

At the start of this chapter, we saw Ter-Łevondyan's argument that the goals and mechanisms of rule utilized by the Caliphate were substantially different than those seen under the Sasanian and Byzantine Empires. Specifically, he noted that "[t]he natural policy of both the Sasanians and Byzantium toward Armenia was the attempt to bind the country to themselves by various religious and other ties."[75] This may very well hold true if we turn primarily to the fifth-century approach of Yazdegerd, who attempted to force Zoroastrianism on the Armenian, Georgian, and Albanian populace. However, as we see in the exultant triumph of numerous subsequent Armenian retellings of this history, this attempt failed. Later Sasanians allowed for the practice of Christianity in the North.

According to Armenian sources, Sasanian policy afforded freedom of worship based on one's "ancestral traditions" or "the laws of one's fathers" (*hayreni awrēnk'*). Sebēos preserves an account about a disputation in which Christians of various denominations presented themselves to Kavād I and his son Ḵosrow I Anūshirwān, who commanded: "Let each hold his own faith, and let no one oppress Armenians. They are our subjects. Let them serve us with their body; but as for their souls, only He knows who judges souls."[76] While Sebēos wrote this in the seventh century, he is in agreement with Sasanian-era Armenian sources, as Łazar P'arpec'i and Ełišē note the allowance of "ancestral and original laws" (*hayreni ew bnik awrēnk'*) after the Persian–Armenian wars.[77]

In fact, Byzantine treaties allowed the preservation of "ancestral customs" (κατά τους πατρίους νόμους) elsewhere in the empire. This is

[75] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 19.

[76] Sebēos 1999, 115,1979, 149: Մինչև հրաման տալ Կաւատայ արքայի և որդւոյ նորին Խոսրովու, եթէ "Իւրաքանչիւր ոք զիւր հաւատս կալցի, և զՀայս նեղել ոք մի իշխեսցէ. ամենեքին մեր ծառայք են, մարմնով մեզ ծառայեսցեն, իսկ վասն հոգւոցն, որ զհոգիսն դատի՝ նա գիտէ:"

[77] Ełišē 1982, 183, and Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 390.

common in Greek texts, particularly in reference to Jews under Roman rule.[78] Although Procopius presents Byzantium as the guardian of Christianity in Georgia, all while disparaging Sasanian attempts to foster Zoroastrianism,[79] Byzantine acceptance of ancestral customs does not appear to be common in Armenian sources, which are instead suspicious of Byzantine support for Chalcedonianism and Monothelitism in the North. N. Garsoïan has outlined numerous examples of Byzantine interference in the Armenian Church in the sixth and seventh centuries. They installed Calcedonian catholicoi and forced communion between the Armenian and imperial Churches. The Armenians considered these efforts "abusive compulsions to be equated with imprisonment."[80]

Following the Islamic conquests, the preservation of the Caucasian Churches and the rights of Christians in the North allow a comparison of Sasanian and caliphal rule. Georgian sources assume that the *amān* allowed to the North was based on Qurʾānic precepts. The *History of Vaxtʿang Gorgasali* narrates that a "Hagarene" soldier in the North claimed to have dreamt of the Prophet Muḥammad, who commanded: "God has given us power down to the death of ten kings, as God said to Abraham and to Hagar. But spare the holy churches and the men who serve God, as I commanded you in my Koran."[81] This provides a scriptural explanation for *amān*, the protection offered for the churches, belongings, and beliefs of the Christians of the North.

Much of our information about caliphal allowance of Christianity appears in treaties preserved in ʿAbbāsid-era texts in both Armenian and Arabic.[82] While historians have long questioned the authenticity of these documents, dismissing treaties as informed by the concerns of a much later ʿAbbāsid administration, M. Levy-Rubin recently offered support for the view that these treaties were in fact reliable indicators of early

[78] Levy-Rubin 2011, 116, explains that the Byzantines built off of and expanded these ancient laws. See Linder 2011, 152–3 on the Roman empire.

[79] Procopius 1914, 96–7: "This nation [Iberia, i.e., Kʿartʿli] is Christian and they guard the rites of this faith more closely than any other men known to us, but they have been subjects of the Persian king, as it happens, from ancient times. And just then Cabades [Kavād I, r. 488–96, 498–531] was desirous of forcing them to adopt the rites of his own religion. And he enjoined upon their king, Gourgenes [Vaxtʿang Gorgasali, r. 447–527], to do all things as the Persians were accustomed to do them, and in particular not under any circumstances to hide their dead in the earth, but to throw them all to the birds and the dogs."

[80] Garsoïan 1984, 224–6.

[81] *History of Vaxtʿang Gorgasali* 1996, 244.

[82] Ghazarian 1904, 158–66. See Chapter 6.

interaction between Arabs and the élite of the newly conquered territories. She supports this view by arguing that the treaties should be seen as caliphal acceptance of the norms of Byzantine and Sasanian political maneuvering. Specifically, she notes that the treaties of Armenia, Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, Mūqān, and Azerbaijan are representative of a genre of "vassal treaties," which appear only in ex-Sasanian territories and accordingly "may indicate that the direct model was a type of treaty used by the Sasanian shahs in their dealings with their feudal lords."[83] If this is the case, Arabic sources support the hypothesis that caliphal recognition of Christianity in the North was informed by Sasanian practice, as the treaties' goal was to preserve the *status quo ante*. We will return to the treaties and *amān* in Chapter 6.

Shāhanshāhs *and Caliphs as Champions of Non-Chalcedonian Christianity*

The *shāhanshāhs* and caliphs alike allowed Christianity in the North and appear in Armenian sources as champions of non-Chalcedonian Christianity. So, for example, Anūshirwān is said to have ordered: "All Christians who are under my authority should hold the faith of Armenia."[84] Sebēos has him specify that this was due to the heretical nature of Chalcedon. After hearing an Armenian description of the early church councils, supported by Jacobite testimony, Anūshirwān responded that "[t]he commands of three kings [Constantine, Theodosius I, and Theodosius II] appear to be more correct than those of one [Marcian]."[85]

Sebēos's insertion of this passage about Kavād and Ḵosrow I Anūshirwān here is instructive. This passage appears only after the death of Muḥammad and midway through the Islamic incursions of the North, in a letter addressed from T'ēodoros Ṙštuni and the catholicos Nersēs to the Byzantine emperor. This suggests that Sebēos evoked the memory of the Sasanians because this historical precedent had contemporary implications that allowed the Armenians not only to back the caliphal armies, but also to turn from a Byzantine rule that forced communion. This passage also suggests that the Armenians could claim ecclesiastical authority over the

[83] Levy-Rubin 2011, 47. See Chapter 6 on taxation.

[84] Sebēos 1999, 118,1979, 151: Յորոյ վերայ հրաման ետ արքայ Խոսրով եթէ ամենայն քրիստոնեայք որ ընդ իմով իշխանութեամբս են հաւատ զՅոյցն կալցին։

[85] Sebēos 1999, 116, 1979, 150: Պատասխանի ետ թագաւորն և ասէ "Երից թագաւորաց հրամանքն ճշմարիտ թուի լինել՝ քան միոյն":

Albanian Church in the Sasanian period, which we will revisit as we return to the Umayyads.

Łazar P'arpec'i notes that the religious ties between the North and Byzantium proved a political threat to the Sasanian Empire, as the *shāhanshāh*s feared that the Christians "will want to serve them [Byzantines] as well, and there will be not a small amount of suspicion in this land of the Aryans as a result."[86] As such, Armenian sources suggest that the Sasanians fostered anti-Chalcedonian sentiment in the North for political purposes. This appears elsewhere, as well, such as when the catholicos Arsēn explained that "les rois des Perses forçaient les Armeniens à se separer de la foi des Grecs … pour que la haine survienne entre eux par effet de la separation religieuse, et qu'ils soient d'autant plus soumis au royaume des Perses."[87]

Once we move into the Umayyad period, we find the caliphs in positions similar to the *shāhanshāh*s, where supporting Armenian anti-Chalcedonianism served to drive a wedge between the North and Byzantium. Just as the Armenian sources make the Sasanians active in discouraging Chalcedonianism, so too do we find in Armenian sources evidence that the caliphs allied with the Armenians to curtail its spread. The Armenian patriarch Ełia, at the request of Albanian bishops, wrote a letter to ʿAbd al-Malik framing the tenure of Chalcedonian doctrine as a politically charged decision:

> To the conqueror of the universe, Abdlay Amir Mumin [امير المؤمنين rendered into Armenian as ամիրմումնոյ], from Ełia, patriarch of Armenia. By the power of Almighty God we hold our vassal country subject to your suzerainty. We and the Albanians worship the divinity of Christ. He who is now catholicos of Albania and has his throne in Partaw has come to an agreement with the emperor of Greece, mentions him in his prayers and forces the land to adopt his faith and unite with him. Let this now be known to you, and do not hesitate to act in this matter, for he is in league with a noblewoman. Order those who wished to sin against God to be punished upon your great authority as their deeds deserve.[88]

[86] Łazar P'arpec'i 1982, 96.

[87] Garsoïan 1984, 237.

[88] Dasxuranc'i 1961, 191, 1983, 295–6: Տիեզերակալ Աբդլայի ամիրմումնոյ. յԵղիայէ՝ Հայոց եպիսկոպոսապետէ: Յամենակալէն Աստուծոյ ունիմք զծառայական աշխարհս հնազանդ ձերոյ տէրութեանդ. և մեք և Աղուանք զմի հաւատ պաշտել ունիմք գՔրիստոսի աստուածութեանն: Իսկ այժմ որ Աղուանիցն է կաթողիկոս նստեալ ի Պարտաւ, խորհուրդ արարեալ ընդ կայսրն Յունաց՝ զնա քարոզէ յաղօթս և զաշխարհս ստիպէ, զի ի հաւատ և ի միաբանութիւն նմա եկեսցեն: Արդ՝ գիտութիւն ձեզ լիցի, և մի անփոյթ արասջիք վասն այդորիկ. զի կին մի մեծատուն խորհրդակից է նորա, զորս պատուհասակոծ հրամայեսջիք առնել մեծ իշխանութեամբ ձերով՝ ըստ արժանի իւրեանց գործոց, զոր առ Աստուած կամեցան մեղանչել:

Dasxuranc'i has ʿAbd al-Malik respond by publicly humiliating the Chalcedonian patriarch, as he promised Ełia:

> I have read your friendly letter, Ełia, man of God, *ǰāthliq* (catholicos)[89] of the Armenian people, and I have sent my faithful servant with a great army to you. Regarding the rebellion of the Albanians against our authority, we have commanded them to be corrected in accordance with your religion. Our servant shall execute our punishment at Partaw in your presence; he will throw Nersēs [the Albanian patriarch] and the woman who is his accomplice into irons and will bring them to the royal court in ignominy that I may make them an example for all rebels to see.[90]

By "our authority" here, Dasxuranc'i is not just claiming caliphal control over the province in lieu of Byzantine, but also positing the rights of an Armenian patriarch to supersede the Albanian ecclesiastical hierarchy. With the apparent blessing of the caliph, the Armenian patriarch Ełia entered Bardhʿa/Partaw to punish the pro-Chalcedonian Albanians.

A very similar story, complete with correspondence, appears in another tenth-century text, Yovhannēs Drasxanakertci's *History of the Armenians*, though he has Ełia write to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz instead of ʿAbd al-Malik,[91] as the former has the same reputation for piety in Armenian sources that we find in the Arabic.[92] Dasxuranc'i, though, has ʿAbd al-Malik follow up by recording the names of non-Chalcedonian Christians at the Council of Bardhʿa/Partaw: "All these names were written in the archives [ديوان rendered in Armenian as դիւան] of Abdlmēlikʿ Amir Mumin in order that if any of them were found to have become duophysites, they might be destroyed by the sword or imprisonment. Thus was peace achieved in all the churches of Albania."[93] Of course, the idea that the Umayyads

[89] See Ter-Łevondyan 1966 on the term جاثلق, a word that typically refers to Syrian *catholicoi* rendered into Armenian as ջաթլկիդ. This passage also curiously uses *Armenean* as an adjective for "Armenian" instead of the usual *Hayocʿ*.

[90] Dasxurancʿi 1961, 192,1983, 296: Զառնդ Աստուծոյ զԵղիայի զԱրմենեան ազգի ջաթլկիդ կարդացի զգիր մտերմութեան, և ի շնորհս քեզ առաքեցի զծառայ իմ հաւատարիմ բազում զօրօք: Եւ վասն ապստամբացն Աղուանից ի մերմէ տէրութենէս հրամայեալ եմք ըստ քո կրօնիցդ առնել առ նոսա ուղղութիւնս, և զմեր պատուհասդ քո առաջի ի Պարտաւ արասցէ ծառայդ մեր. զՆերսէս և զկինն համախոհ նմին ի շղթայս երկաթիս հարեալ՝ անարգանօք ածցէ ի դուռն արքունի, զի ի տեսիլ ամենայն ապստամբացն նշաւակս զնոսա արարից:

[91] Drasxanakertcʿi 1996, 102.

[92] Borrut 2005.

[93] Dasxurancʿi 1961, 198,1983, 305: Այսք ամենեքեան որ գրեցան ի դիւանին Աբդլմելքի ամիրմոմնւոյ սակս այսորիկ, եթէ ոք ի սոցանէ գտանիցի երկաբնակ եղեալ՝ սրով և գերութեամբ սպառեսցի: Այսպէս եղև խաղաղութիւն ամենայն եկեղեցեացս Աղուանից:

would slaughter all Chalcedonian Christians in Albania at the request of Armenian patriarchs is not realistic, but this tradition does suggest that the Armenians remembered caliphal rule as a safeguard against the expansion of Chalcedonianism.

We certainly cannot assume that they sponsored non-Chalcedonian Christianity specifically to emulate Sasanian policy. Instead, we should recognize here that Armenian historians replicate Sasanian support for the religious élite in Armenia in their accounts of the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods. First, both the *shāhanshāh* and caliph alike favor non-Chalcedonian Christianity. Second, it was a political decision that forced the hand of the *shāhanshāh*s and caliphs, who feared the potential alliance between the North and Byzantium should they overcome their religious disagreements. The Armenian catholicos Abraham wrote to non-Chalcedonian Georgians that "it is impossible for servants of the King of kings to be of one faith with servants of foreign kings and to detach themselves from co-religionists of their own country."[94] Third, according to Armenian sources, both the *shāhanshāh*s and the caliphs recognized the Armenian Church as *prima inter pares* of the northern Churches, or at least over the Albanian Church. Finally, they both intermittently supported the rapprochement between the Armenian and Syriac Churches.[95] In other words, the Armenian sources suggest that Sasanian and early Islamic policies toward the religious élite were comparable, which places both in stark contrast with contemporary Byzantine attempts to force the acceptance of Chalcedon or to spread Monothelitism in the North.[96]

The Laws of Apostasy

M. Levy-Rubin draws the comparison that "[b]oth Byzantine and Islamic law punish apostasy with death."[97] Again, the division between Byzantine, Sasanian, and caliphal practices is not nearly clear-cut. A Middle Persian text from the ninth century questions what should happen to apostates from Zoroastrianism to "a non-Iranian (*an-ērīh*) faith" and the response is that "an adult deserves death for leaving the Good Religion, he deserves

[94] Greenwood 2008, 21; Girkʻ Tʻłtʻocʻ 1901, 165: զի ընդ աւտար թագաւորութիւն՝ արքայից արքայի ծառայից սիրոյ միաբանութիւն առնել և զընական հաղորդակիցս որոշել, կարի իսկ դժուարին է.

[95] On the Sasanian period, see Grousset 1984, 184; Mahé 1993; Meyendorff 1989, 282–3.

[96] Mahé 1993, 468–71.

[97] Levy-Rubin 2011, 123.

death for accepting a non-Iranian religion (*dād ī an-ērīh*)."[98] Further, the *Letter of Tansar* reads

> [I]n former days any man who turned from the faith [*dīn*] was swiftly and speedily put to death and punished. The king of kings has ordered that such a man should be imprisoned and that for the space of a year learned men should summon him at frequent intervals and advise him and lay arguments before him and destroy his doubts. If he become[s] penitent and contrite and seek[s] pardon of God, he is set free. If obstinacy and pride hold him back, then he is put to death.[99]

R. Payne, relying mainly on Middle Persian legal texts and Syriac martyrologies, explored this law in the Sasanian context and established certain norms in the application of laws against apostasy. For example, in the Sasanian case, the law was not uniformly applied as the apostates were typically élite who had made some deliberate exposure of their conversion or, in particular, some public challenge to the political institution.[100]

The idea that the law of apostasy is an inheritance from Byzantine to caliphal practice makes no sense in the context of the Christian North, where Armenian sources provide further evidence of the law of apostasy in a Sasanian setting. Sebēos, for example, remarks on the law enacted by Ḵosrow II: "Let none of the impious dare to convert to Christianity, and none of the Christians to impiety but let each one remain firm in his own ancestral tradition. And whoever does not wish to hold his ancestral traditions, shall die."[101]

Martyrologies in both Armenian and Georgian confirm the Middle Persian sources on the law of apostasy in the Sasanian Empire. For example, the sixth-century Georgian *Life of Evstat'i of Mc'xet'a* tells the story of a Zoroastrian from Gandzak named Gwrobandak who moved to Mc'xet'a (the royal capital of K'art'li near Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, known in Arabic as the Mosque of Alexander the Great, *masjid dhī l-Qarnayn*) during the reign of Ḵosrow I Anūshirwān. He became a cobbler, married a Christian woman, converted to Christianity, and changed his name to Evstat'i. The Sasanian governor sent him to Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi along with a number of other Christian converts with the promise that "whoever professes the faith

[98] Daryaee 2010, 93.
[99] Payne 2015, 53.
[100] Payne 2015, 48–56.
[101] Sebēos 1999, I 29–30, 1979, 85: Եւ հրաման ետ, ասէ "Մի ոք յանաւրինաց իշխեսցէ դառնալ ի քրիստոնէութիւն, և մի ոք ի քրիստոնէից դարձցի յանաւրինութիւն, այլ իւրաքանչիւր ոք յիւր հայրենի յաւրէնս պինդ կացցէ: Եւ որ ոչն կամիցի ունել զհայրենի դէն, այլ ապստամբեալ ի բաց կացցէ յիւր հայրենի աւրինացն՝ մեռցի":

of his fathers I will let live, and whoever will not profess it shall die in prison." One of the prisoners is freed when certain princes convinced the Sasanian officials that he was Syrian, so Christianity was in fact his ancestral religion. After three years in prison, Evstat'i concluded "now carry out the official sentence upon my person" and the reluctant authorities killed him.[102]

Two centuries later, a perfumer named Habo moved from Baghdad to Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi. Iovane Sabanis-dze, the author of Habo's *vita*, specifies that he "had no foreign blood in him," that he was born "of pure Arab stock on both his father's and mother's side of the family," and that all of his relatives were Muslims. He learned Georgian, converted to Christianity, and accompanied the K'art'velian prince to Khazaria and Abkhāz/Ap'xazet'i. As he returned to Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, the king of Abkhāz/Ap'xazet'i exhorted him without success: "Do not leave this country because the Saracens control the land of Georgia, and you are of Saracen blood. They will not tolerate you among them as a Christian." Once he returned to Georgia, a reluctant *amīr* arrested him and allowed him nine days in prison to convert back to Islam. He was executed for apostasy on January 6, 786.[103]

Martyrologies of the Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid North such as the stories of Evstat'i and Habo thus exhibit commonalities, a reflection of the laws of apostasy under Sasanian and caliphal rule. Armenian martyrs, such as Vahan Gołt'nec'i and Dawit' Duinec'i, conform to this pattern and bring comparable laws into the Umayyad period. Dawit' Duinec'i was an Iranian (or, according to his martyrology, a *tačik*) who arrived in Armenia with the Islamic incursions in the 650s and converted to Christianity. He was executed for apostasy during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik around 703.[104] Vahan Gołt'nec'i was ethnically Armenian, but he had been raised Muslim at the Umayyad court in Damascus and was "profondément versé dans les récits fabuleux des Arabes." He was executed for apostasy at the caliphal court in Ruṣāfa in 737.[105]

The relationship between the caliphal power structure and the religious élite of the North appears comparable to the norms of Sasanian rule in that the caliphs and their representatives safeguarded the practice of Christianity, actively supported non-Chalcedonian (read: non-Byzantine) Christianity, and administered laws that reflected Sasanian policies. As a

[102] Lang 1956, 94–114; Rapp 2014, 45–7.
[103] Bíró 1977; Lang 1956, 115–33; Schultze 1905.
[104] Drasxanakertc'i 1996, 94–8; Hoyland 2007, 371–3 and 672–6; Jinbashian 2000, 131.
[105] Gatteyrias 1880; Hoyland 2007, 373–5; Jinbashian 2000, 198.

result, there is considerable common ground between Armenian descriptions of late Sasanian and early caliphal rule, especially when we add to this the relations between the Arabs and the political élite. Just as T'ovma Arcruni complains that the Arabs do not confirm his suspicions about Arab policy vis-à-vis the élite, so too is it difficult (impossible?) to prove that caliphal governors or caliphs actually concerned themselves with the Armenian Church, its non-Chalcedonian doctrine, or its claims over the Albanian Church. M. Ghazarian notes that "[ü]ber die Stellung der armenischen Kirche und des Patriarchen unter der arabischen Herrschaft sind bei den von mir benutzten arabischen Historiker absolut keine Angeben zu finden." In the century since he published his "Armenien unter der arabischen Herrschaft" (1904), many more Arabic chronicles have been discovered and/or published, but his assessment rings true even today. The lack of data about the Church in Arabic sources does not necessarily suggest that the Church was not a formidable political actor at the time, but it does raise flags about how concerns internal to the Armenian tradition may have colored the description of Arab–Armenian relations in Armenian sources.

CONCLUSIONS

The Sasanians, Byzantines, Umayyads, and ʿAbbāsids all faced a deeply rooted system of hierarchical power in Armenia and Albania, and we would be hard pressed to cobble together evidence for a centralized Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid empire. This chapter looks at the attempted mechanisms of control, or what we mean by caliphal "rule" in the decentralized North. This is organized along three main levels of society: the movement of the masses (forced emigration and encouraged immigration), the dealings of the central powers and the local élites (taking hostages and encouraging disunity), and the policy toward the churches of the North (allowance of ancestral religion, the caliphs and *shāhanshāh*s as champions of non-Chalcedonian Christianity, and the law of apostasy). At each level, we find common ground between Ctesiphon, Constantinople, Damascus, and Baghdad, such that it is hard to draw exact distinctions between the policies of one empire and its neighbor. Yet a closer connection remains between late Sasanian and caliphal rule after the Marwānid Reforms, partly due to religious contestations about Chalcedonianism and partly because our authors frequently turn to Sasanian-era texts as models to describe caliphal rule.

6

Taxing the Dead and Sealing the Necks of the Living

Sasanian and Caliphal Treaties and Taxation in the North

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, an Armenian priest first recorded the Armenian national epic translated today as *The Daredevils of Sasun*.[1] This popular epic, which was transmitted from generation to generation in dozens, if not hundreds, of different versions over the centuries, tells the story of the seventh-century Islamic incursions into Armenia and the subsequent Armenian struggles against caliphal rule in the North. The variants circulated only orally in Armenian from the seventh century on, though garbled echoes of the story appear in a twelfth-century Arabic text attributed to Wāqidī and in two sixteenth-century legends, one in Persian and the other in Portuguese.[2] Through its oral transmission, "the old epic has been transformed, for example, the Persians were replaced by the Arabs and later by Msra Melik‘,"[3] a perfectly detestable antihero and either the stepfather or the stepbrother of the story's main hero, Sasunc‘i Dawit‘. Msra Melik‘ was also the ruler of Egypt, as is evident from his name, an Armenicized version of the Arabic *malik miṣr*, "the king of Egypt," with the final *a* of Msra denoting the Armenian genitive.

At one point, Msra Melik‘ sends to southern Armenia his tax collector, Kozbadin, whose name seems to render the interesting Arabic epithet Qaṣṣāb al-Dīn: *qaṣṣāb*, literally "butcher" or "slaughterer," appears in Arabic to refer to the surveyor responsible for the land census, combined with *al-dīn*, "religion" (here: Islam). Accordingly, the name Kozbadin

[1] On other translations of this name, see Kouymjian 2013, 1, n. 2.

[2] Ter-Łevondyan 2013. He notes that the version in Arabic was informed by Armenian renditions from, at the latest, the tenth century.

[3] Abgharyan, apud. Yełiazaryan 2008, 21.

may be translated as both "the Butcher of Islam" and "the Census-Taker of Islam." Our hero Dawit' confronts Kozbadin, mutilating his face:

> Davit' grew angry, he stopped,
> Struck Kozbadin with the measuring weight
> And fractured his skull.
> He cut away Kozbadin's lips,
> Extracted his teeth, set them on his forehead, and said:
> "Go and show yourself to your Msra Melik'. Let him do what he will."[4]

H. Simonyan sees in this an echo of the Alexander legends, citing a passage that has Alexander challenge the tax collectors of Darius with comparable words ("Go and take [the] news to Darius, the Persian king").[5] This reflects the sustained comparison between Persian and caliphal rule in Armenian sources, yet for our purposes here, the subject, viz. the tax collectors as representatives of foreign claims, is perhaps more significant.

The choice of a measuring weight as a weapon is certainly not spurious, and this scene showcases Dawit''s heroic resistance to foreign rule through his violent refusal to allow taxation. We are not dealing solely in the realm of fiction here, as tax collectors were primary symbols of imperial power and they were frequently the first casualties of unrest in the North. According to Łewond, the first sign of the Armenian rebellion of 748 was when Artawazd Mamikonean killed a caliphal tax collector.[6] Ibn Aʿtham and Yaʿqūbī also explain that during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the people of Bardhʿa/Partaw killed Abū l-Ṣabbāḥ, who was a tax collector (an administrator *ʿalā l-kharāj*).[7]

One of the main themes of *The Daredevils of Sasun* is Armenian frustration with caliphal taxation,[8] which serves as a reminder to modern scholars that the financial relationship between the Caliphate and the provinces of the North is perhaps the easiest thread of interactions to trace through the literature extant today. It is also, curiously, the main topic where Armenian sources find common ground with Syriac histories, whose authors similarly wax nostalgic about lax Sufyānid rule to disparage the perceived heavy-handed taxation in the Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid periods. The goal of this chapter is to identify moments of perceived continuity and demonstrable transformation. This challenges any

[4] Yełiazaryan 2008, 126.
[5] Yełiazaryan 2008, 38.
[6] Garsoïan 2004a, 131.
[7] Ibn Aʿtham 1975, VIII 254; Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 49; Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 516.
[8] Yełiazaryan 2008, 4.

arguments for continuity within the fiscal administration of the North and reveals the significance of Iranian social mores in the sources about the Marwānid and ʿAbbāsid North.

TREATIES AND THE QUESTION OF RELIABILITY

There is a modern tradition that the Armenians received their writ of protection (*amān*) in 660 directly from the caliph ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad. The treaty between ʿAlī and the Armenians was translated into Armenian in 1767 and verified in 1804, reportedly from a remarkably early Arabic manuscript. In a tragic turn of events, the vice president of the Asiatic Society of Bengal lost the manuscript amidst the mess on his desk sometime in the early nineteenth century, which inevitably initiates the debate about its authenticity. This skepticism can only be compounded by the fact that J. Avdall, who repeatedly vouched for the document's contents and the Kufic script to prove its antiquity, also called ʿAlī "the fourth Caliph of Baghdād" multiple times in his article.[9]

Nevertheless, the document preserves interesting and curious details that pique the interest of modern Islamicists, such as the distinction between Muslims and *muʾminūn*.[10] Whoever fashioned the treaty between ʿAlī and the Armenians modeled it on the Constitution of Medina. Given that the preservation of the Constitution of Medina is attributed to ʿAlī,[11] we might even wonder if this is an attempt to make the Armenians party to the original Constitution. It certainly does not fit comfortably with the earliest Armenian descriptions of the early Caliphate. Łewond, for example, follows some examples of Syrian historiography and completely omits ʿAlī from early Islamic history.

Instead, this treaty belongs to a much broader and later tradition suggesting that the first Arab–Armenian treaty was signed within the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad.[12] This legend holds that an Armenian

[9] Avdall 1870. Sanjian 1979, 13, fig. 4 shows a manuscript on parchment labeled "firman attributed to Caliph Ali." This might be the same text, but no date is suggested here. The image is small and inverted such that the Arabic script appears from left to right, making it difficult to decipher.

[10] Avdall 1870; on the issue of the *muʾminūn*, see Donner 2010.

[11] Crone 1980, 7.

[12] Sanjian 1979, 11, fig. 2, shows "the firman attributed to the Prophet Mohammed, confirming the rights of the Armenians in the Holy Places of Jerusalem." Again, this image is small and inverted such that the Arabic script appears from left to right, making it difficult to decipher.

priest visited Muḥammad in Medina not long before his death. Unusually, we have two texts that allow us to hypothesize about the genesis of this tradition.

Łewond does not record a prophetic *amān*, but he does tell of an agreement after the Armenian victory over the caliphal army at the Battle of Warthān/Vardanakert in 703. ʿAbd al-Malik responded to the defeat by sending his brother Muḥammad b. Marwān back to the North to quell the rebellion. The Armenian nobles subsequently sent their catholicos Sahak to parlay with the caliphal governor on their behalf, hoping to stem the forthcoming retribution. Sahak arrived in Ḥarrān/Xaṙan to request a writ of protection from the general, but he took ill and died. On his deathbed, Sahak penned a note to the Marwānid general:

"I," he said, "was sent before you by my people to tell you my plan, which the *naxarark*ʿ and [the] common people of Armenia in agreement beg from you. But the Keeper of the stores of life has snatched me hastily to Himself, so I will not have time to meet you and to speak with you. But now I swear to you by the living God and I lay before you the pact, the covenant of God, which [was] with Ishmael, your father, as it promised to give him [Ishmael] the world in servitude and in vassalage. So, should you make peace with my people, they will serve you by paying tribute; should you stay your sword from bloodshed and your hand from pillaging, they will submit to you with all their heart. But concerning our faith, we should have the privilege to keep to what we have believed and have confessed. May no one from among you torment us to turn from our beliefs. Now should you do as I have entreated, the Lord will favor your rule and the intent of your will will be fulfilled. The Lord will submit everyone to you. But should you not wish to listen to my words and perversely conceive to rise up against my land, the Lord will shatter your intentions and your course will not be assured. He will turn the heart of your troops so as not to do your wishes; he will agitate troublemakers for you from every region; and your rule will not be secure. So do not neglect my entreaty and may my blessings come upon you."[13]

[13] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 22v–23r: Ես ասէ առաքեցա ընդ առաջ քո յազգէն իմ խաւսել զխորհուրդս իմ առաջի քո. զոր միաբանեալ նախարարք և ռամիկք հայոց հայցեն ի քէն. այլ որ կենացն է շտեմարանապետ ստիպով յափշտակեաց զիս առ ինքն, և ոչ ժամանե[ս]ցի հանդիպել քեզ և խաւսել ընդ քեզ. այլ արդ երդմնեցուցանեմ զքեզ ի կենդանին *աստուած*. և դաշինս դնեմ քեզ զուխտն *աստուծոյ* որ առ իսմաէլ հայրն ձեր, որպէս խոստացաւ տալ նմա զտիեզերս ի ծառաւթիւն և ի հնազանդութիւն. զի արասցես խաղաղութիւն ընդ ժողովրդեան իմում. և ծառաեսցեն քեզ հարկատրութեամբ. արգելցես զսուր քո յարենէ և զձեռն քո յաւարառութենէ. և հնազանդեսցեն քեզ յամենայն սրտէ իւրեանց: բայց վասն հաւատոյս մեր, զի իշխանութիւն լիցի մեզ պահել յոր հաւատացաքն և խոստովանեցաք. և ոք ի ձերոց այտի մի խոշտանգեսցէ զմեզ դառնալ ի հաւատոց մեր: Արդ էթէ արասցես զհայցուածս իմ յաջողեսցէ տէր զիշխանութիւնդ քո. և կատարէսցին խորհուրդք կամաց քո. և տէր հնազանդեցուսցէ

Muḥammad b. Marwān, reportedly moved by the piety and devotion of the catholicos, subsequently offered the Armenians *amān* and held to his agreement without acting against the rebels. This is not only an important moment in Marwānid rule over the caliphal North, as we will see; it also becomes a *lieu de mémoire* in Armenian historical consciousness.

This story appears in a very similar form in the later history of Ps. Šapuh Bagratuni. This text is particularly difficult to date, but it preserves a treasure trove of orally transmitted stories about the eighth and ninth centuries. Ps. Šapuh's version also has Sahak approach Muḥammad b. Marwān and leave a letter that would serve as a posthumous *amān* guaranteeing the preservation of lives and religion in exchange for taxes. Šapuh's Sahak similarly promises that Islamic rule would be glorified if the rulers met these stipulations, but flounder and collapse should they fail.

Yet whereas Łewond cites Old Testament covenants for the basis of Sahak's agreement ("I lay before you the pact, the covenant of God, which [was] with Ishmael, your father, as it promised to give him [Ishmael] the world in servitude and in vassalage"), Šapuh instead has Sahak claim, "I have the letter of Mahmēt your father and legislator which obliges my nation to pay you tribute and to serve loyally and to obey as it is right (to obey) lords."[14] The "father" of the Muslims shifts from Ishmael in Łewond's *History* to the Prophet Muḥammad in Ps. Šapuh's.

The Armenians did indeed receive their *amān* from a Muḥammad, but it was not the Prophet Muḥammad. Łewond, our earliest extant source on this agreement, clarifies that the agreement was made with the Marwānid governor of the North, Muḥammad b. Marwān. To add significance and/or entertainment to the tale, Muḥammad b. Marwān's *amān* gleaned new significance through its transformation into a prophetic document. Once spawned, the idea that the Prophet himself granted *amān* to the Armenians continues into the Mongol period and supposedly serves as the model for Safavid agreements,[15] and so its examination should rest today in the hands of historians of the Mongol and Safavid periods.

զամենեսին ընդ ձեռամբ քո. ապա թէ ոչ կամիցիս լսել բանից իմ. և խոտորնակ իմասցիս յառնել ի վերա աշխարհին իմ. տէր ցրուեսցէ զխորհուրդ քո. և մի հաս տատեսցին գնացք ոտից քո. և դարձուսցէ զսիրտ զաւրաց քո չառնել զկամս քո. և յարուսցէ *յամենայն* կողմանց նեղիչ անձին քո. և մի կացցէ իշխանութիւնդ քո հաստատուն: արդ մի անտես առներ զհայցուածս իմ. և եկեսցեն ի վերա քո աւրհնութիւնք իմ: See ŁEWOND 1857, 50.

[14] ŠAPUH BAGRATUNI 1989, 196, 1971, 89: Եւ արդ ունիմ զգիր ձեռին Մահմէտի հօր քո և օրինադրին ձեռոյ, որ պարտին քեզ հարկս տալ ազգայտոհմն իմ եւ ծառայել միայմընտութեամբ և հնազանդել որպէս վայել է տէրանց.

[15] DADOYAN 2011, 60–1; on its appearance in the works of Kirakos Ganjakec'i and Grigor Tat'ewac'i, see 70.

These extraordinary examples demonstrate that the historical records of treaties are imbued with political weight, and therefore should be considered in the political and cultural milieu of the texts' production. There has been no shortage of ink spilt on the topic of authenticity of the *futūḥ* narratives and the formulaic nature of Arabic treaties. Modern scholars have traditionally distanced themselves from the data available in ʿAbbāsid-era *futūḥ* narratives, claiming to see the concerns of ʿAbbāsid administration more than those of the earliest conquest.[16] Can the ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic *futūḥ* narratives, even bolstered by ʿAbbāsid-era juridical texts, inform our reading about the seventh-century North? We have Sebēos's seventh-century text, complete with a treaty from 652, but if we interpret Sebēos based on later criterion, we run the risk of anachronistic conclusions by grafting ʿAbbāsid-era concerns onto an Umayyad-era text.

Recently, scholars such as W. al-Qāḍī and M. Levy-Rubin have pushed back at this skepticism, though, presenting a number of credible arguments regarding other legal documents and papyri finds. Levy-Rubin suggests, as we will see, that these treaties were "not a later anachronistic invention of Muslim jurists, but rather an adaptation of the common Near Eastern tradition."[17] There are different ways to gauge reliability in these cases. The stipulations preserved in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic treaties allow us to speculate on both the conditions of the conquest period (in conjunction with the Armenian tradition) and the circumstances and concerns at the time of their composition or transmission.

We should examine the possibility that the treaties indeed preserve some kernel of truth. The text of a treaty in an Umayyad-era Armenian text serves as an independent check on the later Arabic sources.[18] In this, Sebēos's treaty joins a larger body of early non-Islamic sources that can shed light on the later Arabic texts. This is comparable, for example, to the studies of conquest-era Central Asia, which have made fruitful comparisons between the late Arabic sources, Chinese texts, and Sogdian manuscripts.[19] It is similarly comparable to the study of the *Chronicle of Khūzistān*, a seventh-century Syriac text on the Islamic conquest of Khūzistān/Bēt Hūzāyē in southwestern Iran. Here, the comparison with the Arabic chronicles reveals that Syriac sources both "vindicate *and* repudiate" the later Islamic tradition.[20] And should we uncover information

[16] Donner 1998; Noth 1994.
[17] Levy-Rubin 2011, 41; see also 8–10.
[18] On whether the Armenian sources are independent from the Arabic, see Vacca 2016.
[19] Gibb 1923; La Vaissière 2011.
[20] Robinson 2004, 35.

that repudiates the Islamic tradition, such data remain relevant from a mnemohistorical perspective to examine the broader circumstances surrounding the production of the later texts.

SASANIAN TAXATION AND THE ISLAMIC CONQUEST

In his study on the poll tax in early Islam, D. Dennett suggests that caliphal representatives maintained the fiscal policies already extant in each province as they conquered it, allowing the collection and amount of taxation to remain stable through the period of regime change.[21] He supports this assertion by examining the records province by province, but he does not include Armenia or Albania. While many of the specifics of Dennett's arguments have not been widely accepted, some recognition remains that, very generally speaking, caliphal taxation policies did build off of the preexisting norms of the newly conquered territories. The *jizya* (capitation or poll tax) and the *kharāj* (land tax) conform broadly to both Byzantine and Sasanian practice.

N. Adontz explained that "[t]he system of the Arabs was not created by them, but went back to the preceding period and was their inheritance from the Sasanians."[22] He even suggests common ground between the Arabic *kharāj* and the Armenian *hark* (հարկ means "tax" while the verb հարկել means "to plow") via the Persian **harāka*. *Jizya* appears in the Sasanian context as *gezit'*, which he links to the Armenian *gzat'* (գզաթ, from գզել, meaning "a measure of wool") with the explanation that taxes were paid in kind.[23] The Armenian words *sak* (Middle Persian: *sāk*) and *baž* (Middle Persian: *baj*), then, are merely Iranian equivalents of the Semitic *gezit'* and *kharāj* via the Persian *gezīth* and *xarag*. M. Canard correctly points out that these etymologies are suspect. He traces *kharāj* instead to the Greek (χορηγιά) or to the Aramaic (כרגא) and *gezīth* to the Aramaic (גזיאתא or ܓܙܝܬܐ).[24] Regardless of the source of the Armenian *hark* or *gzat'*, this serves as a reminder that caliphal taxation policies were the product of a number of different inheritances, including both Byzantine and Sasanian practice.

[21] Dennett 1950, 14.
[22] Adontz 1970, 363.
[23] Adontz 1970, 364; Schwarz 2003,2004.
[24] Laurent & Canard 1980, 222, n. 38. For references to the Aramaic, see "gzy, gzyt'" and "krg, krg'" in the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project hosted by the Hebrew Union College at http://cal.huc.edu/.

The Arabic sources preserve some concept of tribute (*itāwa*) and/or taxation (both *jizya* and *kharāj*) in the peace treaties relevant to the conquest-era North.[25] Balādhurī's treaty between Ḥabīb b. Maslama and the "Christians, Magis, and Jews of Dabīl" stipulated an unspecified amount of *jizya* and *kharāj*.[26] Balādhurī and Ṭabarī's treaties between Ḥabīb b. Maslama and the people of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi require *jizya* in the amount of a dinar per household.[27] Ṭabarī's treaty between Surāqa b. ʿAmr and Shahrbarāz, the governor of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband and all Armenians, promised freedom from taxation to those who served to defend the frontier and the payment of *jizya* to those who refused. Ṭabarī's treaty between Bukayr b. ʿAbd Allāh and the people of Mūqān required the payment of *jizya*, a dinar for every adult.[28]

The earliest references to caliphal taxation are found in these treaties. Sebēos's seventh-century *History* refers to an Arab–Armenian treaty signed between "the Prince of the Ishmaelites," traditionally identified as Muʿāwiya, then governor of Syria, and the patrician T'ēodoros Ṙštuni in 652. The relevant passage in Sebēos's text reads:

> Let this be the pact of my treaty between me and you for as many years as you may wish. I shall not take tribute [Armenian: *sak*; Middle Persian: *sāk*] from you for a three-year period. Then you will pay [tribute] with an oath, as much as you may wish. You will keep in your country 15,000 cavalry, and provide sustenance from your country; and I shall reckon [Armenian: *angarem,* Middle Persian: *angartan*][29] it on the royal tax. I shall not request the cavalry for Syria; but whatever else I command they shall be ready for duty. I shall not send amirs [أمير rendered in Armenian, nom. pl., as ամիրայք] to your fortresses, nor an Arab [*tačik*] army – neither many, nor even down to a single cavalryman. An enemy shall not enter

[25] For a summary of the Arabic treaties, see Hill 1971, 159–63.

[26] Ghazarian 1904, 162. Since the following discussion will suggest a shift from *jizya* to *kharāj* after the Marwānid Reforms, mention of both *jizya* and *kharāj* in the conquest period may seem incongruous. Most modern scholars follow Wellhausen and argue that the definition between *jizya* and *kharāj* was not formalized in the conquest period. Wellhausen puts the definition between the two to 121 AH; Lammens puts it earlier, while Dennett points out that none of our extant sources can provide a reasonable date for the solidification of the definitions of these terms because there was always a certain fluidity between them. Their inclusion here, then, is not problematic. As Dennett notes: "As long as the Arabs were receiving agents, but not collecting and assessing agents, they did not make any distinction between land and poll taxes" (1950, 3–5). See also Løkkegaard 1950, 131; Papaconstantinou 2009, 63.

[27] Balādhurī, apud. Ghazarian 1904, 164: Ṭabarī, apud. Ghazarian 1904, 166.

[28] Ṭabarī, apud. Ghazarian 1904, 158.

[29] Jinbashian 1978, 170, n. 4.

Armenia; and if the Romans attack you I shall send you troops in support, as many as you may wish. I swear by the great God that I shall not be false.[30]

Sebēos's treaty provides a contemporary glimpse at seventh-century relations between the Umayyad family and the Armenians. In the conquest period, Arab leaders expected tribute paid in military service and they did not set up government in the province. The obligation of providing military aid is quite common in Arabic descriptions of conquest-era "vassal" treaties of the ex-Sasanian territories, including in the East,[31] as is the promise of protection. The presence of the Armenicized Middle Persian անգարեմ in Sebēos's treaty lends some weight to Levy-Rubin's argument that the earliest treaties were modeled on the preexisting norms in conquered territories. Presumably, the precursors or models of this treaty are Sasanian.

As for the expected tribute, M. Jinbashian argues that it is difficult to believe that Muʿāwiya would allow the Armenians to send however much they wanted to pay.[32] Instead, he suggests that Muʿāwiya would not have signed a document written in Armenian and that the original treaty was in Arabic. Assuming that the Armenian version therefore belies unfamiliarity with Arabic, Jinbashian reconstructs the passage as follows: لا آخذ منكم خراجاً لمدة ثلاث سنوات بعدئذ تدفعون العفو بمقتضى صلحكم and translates this as: "I will not take from you tribute for three years; then you shall pay according to your treaty the surplus." His rationale for this reconstruction rests on the prohibition on taxing people beyond their capacity and the *futūḥ* narratives for Iṣfahān and Jurjān that stipulate taxation "according to their ability." Sebēos's translation of the treaty therefore merely misreads the Arabic term *ʿafw*, or surplus, and should therefore read "as much as you are able" instead of "as much as you want."[33]

F. Løkkegaard examines caliphal taxation policies from an ʿAbbāsid-era juridical perspective and identifies the provision that people pay *ʿalā qadr*

[30] Sebēos 1999, I 136, 1979, 164: Այս լիցի ուխտ հաշտութեան իմոյ ընդ իս և ընդ ձեզ որչափ ամաց և դուք կամիջիք. և ոչ առնում ի ձէնջ սակ զերեամ մի.ապա յայնժամ տաջիք երդմամբ, որչափ և դուք կամիջիք։ Եւ հեծեալ կալէք յաշխարհիդ ԺԵ հազար, և հաց յաշխարհէն տուք, և ես ի սակն արքունի անգարեմ.և զհեծեալսն յԱսորիս ոչ խնդրեմ.բայց այլ ուր և հրամայեմ պատրաստ լիցին ի գործ. և ոչ արձակեմ ի բերդորայն ամիրայս, և ոչ տաճիկ սպայ ի բազմաց մինչև ցմի հեծեալ։ Թշնամի մի մտցի ի Հայս. և եթէ գայ Հոռոմ ի վերայ ձեր արձակեմ ձեզ զաւրս յաւգնականութիւն որչափ և դուք կամիջիք։ Եւ երդնում ի մեծն Աստուած եթէ ոչ ստեմ։

[31] Haug 2010, 332.

[32] Cf. Robinson 2000, 3 citing Abū Yūsuf's *Kitāb al-Kharāj*: "He [Iyāḍ] entered into a ṣulḥ with them [the Edessans] on the terms they requested."

[33] Jinbashian 1978.

al-ṭāqa, "according to the utmost ability, which probably means that the *ʿafw* or *faḍl* (surplus) that is calculated to be held by the taxpayers is estimated as high as possible" in lands conquered by treaty instead of by force.[34] Accordingly, at best this indicates only that Jinbashian's reading of Sebēos's treaty is in line with theoretical discussions about ʿAbbāsid-era norms of taxation. The agreement to pay "as much as you are able" also appears in Sasanian-era Armenian sources to refer to the Sasanian agreements with the Armenians,[35] providing additional support for the argument that Sebēos's Arab–Armenian treaty is informed by Sasanian antecedents.

This exact treaty does not appear in Arabic. Balādhurī mentions several treaties fashioned with the élite of the North, but the only examples involving Muʿāwiya are spelled out in very general terms. He explains that the caliph ʿUthmān ordered Muʿāwiya to send Ḥabīb b. Maslama to Armenia (or perhaps ʿUthmān wrote directly to Ḥabīb), and that the latter arrived in Qālīqalā/Karin with 6,000 or 8,000 soldiers from Syria and Jazīra. Ḥabīb granted the Armenians a writ of protection, promising to allow them to choose between emigrating from the North or paying capitation tax (*jizya*). Ḥabīb then wrote to ʿUthmān for reinforcements and ʿUthmān compelled Muʿāwiya to send an additional 2,000 soldiers.[36]

Given the involvement of Syrian and Jazarī soldiers here, it is possible that this refers to the Armenian traditions about a treaty between "the Ishmaelite prince" and T'ēodoros. Although Ḥabīb b. Maslama's treaties with Dabīl/Duin and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi have been preserved in Arabic, those terms are nothing like Sebēos's treaty whereas Balādhurī's reference to the treaty of Qālīqalā/Karin is a closer fit to the Armenian rendition. Sebēos does not locate where the treaty was signed, but he does follow his explanation of it with the comment that the Byzantine emperor immediately marched on Qālīqalā/Karin with the belated assurance: "I am coming to help you."[37]

Yet there are two reasons to suggest that Sebēos is not, in fact, referring to the treaty of Qālīqalā/Karin. First, Sebēos has T'ēodoros sign the treaty on behalf of the Armenians, while Balādhurī makes the townspeople signatories instead of a nobleman. Perhaps more problematic is Balādhurī's

[34] Løkkegaard 1950, 79; see Robinson 2000, 3 and 11.
[35] Sebēos 1999, 136, n. 839.
[36] Balādhurī 1866, 197.
[37] Sebēos 1999, I 136 and II 267: According to this commentary, the Byzantine emperor was going to Qālīqalā/Karin to meet with "the princes of western and central Armenia, who had not defected."

claim that Muʿāwiya settled 2,000 men in Qālīqalā/Karin. If Muʿāwiya set up an Arab garrison (*murābiṭa*)[38] immediately following the treaty at Qālīqalā/Karin, it certainly seems unlikely that Balādhurī and Sebēos's texts refer to the same treaty. Sebēos later claims that T'ēodoros visited Muʿāwiya in Damascus, offering presents in return for robes of honor and caliphal recognition of his post. This passage mentions (yet another?) pact between the two leaders, so perhaps it was signed in Damascus.[39]

N. Garsoïan instead compares Sebēos's treaty to Balādhurī's agreement between Ḥabīb b. Maslama and Dabīl/Duin, suggesting that the differences can be accounted for with "the Armenian author's wish to show the preferential treatment granted to his country" because the Umayyads relied on Armenian cavalry.[40] But the interest in cavalry appears in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic treaties with the North as well, just not in that particular example, and the authors writing in Arabic would have no reason to demonstrate "preferential treatment." The reliance on local cavalry is also not unique to the North or to the conquest period. It was Sasanian policy, as Garsoïan herself indicates on the authority of the fifth-century historian Ełišē,[41] and spread across the Iranian frontiers. As a point of comparison, the Arabic conquest treaty for Marw al-Rūdh in Khurāsān stipulates the service required of the *asāwirā* (Parthian: *asbār*; Middle Persian: *aswār*), the term used to refer to the Sasanian cavalry. Like the Armenian and Albanian cavalry (and we will return to the Albanian cavalry), these *asāwirā* were not paid by the *dīwān*, but maintained the borders as service to the nascent state in lieu of taxation. They were also not expected to convert to Islam.[42]

In fact, Ṭabarī's treaty between Surāqa b. ʿAmr and Shahrbarāz, dated to 642/3, predating the treaty between Muʿāwiya and T'ēodoros Ṙštuni by exactly a decade, offers the closest comparison to the terms found in Sebēos's *History*. Before listing the terms of the agreement, Shahrbarāz says "[o]ur tribute to you will be the military assistance we render you and our carrying out whatever you desire. But do not humiliate us with

[38] The term *ribāṭ* occurs very rarely in reference to the caliphal North. For this term, see Borrut & Picard 2003; Eger 2012.

[39] Sebēos 1999, 143. Muʿāwiya recognized T'ēodoros as the prince of Armenia, Albania, Georgia, and Siwnik', as we saw in Chapter 2. This section, several pages after the full treaty, ends: "He had made a pact with him to bring that land into subjection."

[40] Garsoïan 2012b, 34–5.

[41] Ełišē 1982, 74.

[42] Levy-Rubin 2011, 49; on the *asāwirā*, see al-Qāḍī 2016, 94–7; ʿAthamina 1998, 350; Bosworth, "Asāwerā," *EIr*.

tribute, so that you render us weak against your enemy."[43] The idea that taxation was a form of humiliation recurs in Arabic sources and has Qurʾānic support (Q9:29). Presumably this refers to the idea that the act of capitulating was a sign of military and/or political inferiority. Perhaps more importantly for our purposes, though, taxes were remitted for the highest political, military, and religious classes in the Sasanian period, meaning that "payment of the tax amounted to a badge of degradation and a mark of social inferiority."[44] Humiliation, *ṣaghār*, is the most commonly cited complaint about the taxation policies in Arabic sources.

According to this treaty between Surāqa b. ʿAmr and Shahrbarāz, the frontier dictates the tribute:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is the safe-conduct Surāqa b. ʿAmr, governor of the Commander of the Faithful, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, has granted to Shahrbarāz, the inhabitants of Armenia, and the Armenians. [He grants] them safe-conduct for their persons, their possessions, and their religion lest they be harmed and so that nothing be taken from them. [The following is imposed] upon the people of Armenia and al-Abwāb, those coming from distant parts and those who are local and those around them who have joined them: they should participate in any military expedition, and carry out any task, actual or potential, that the governor considers to be for the good, providing that those who agree to this are exempt from tribute but [perform] military service. Military service shall be instead of their paying tribute. But those of them who are not needed for military service and who remain inactive have similar tribute obligations to the people of Azerbaijan [in general]. [These include] guiding and showing hospitality for a whole day. If they perform military service, they are exempt from [all] this. If they abandon [the agreement], they will be punished.[45]

Here, like in Sebēos's treaty, caliphal representatives take military aid in lieu of taxes. The Armenians were not expected to pay tribute at all, as long as they held the borders. This avoided the humiliation (*ṣaghār*) of taxation.

[43] Ṭabarī 1994, XIV 35, 1893, I 2664: وجزيتنا اليكم النصر لكم والقيام بما تحبون فلا تذلونا بالجزية فتوهنونا لعدوّكم

[44] Dennett 1950, 15. See also Morony 1974, 119.

[45] Ṭabarī 1994, XIV 36, 1893, I 2665–6: هذا ما اعطى سُراقة بن عمرو عامل امير المؤمنين عمر بن الخطّاب شهربراز وسكّان ارمينية والارمن من الامان اعطاهم اماناً لانفسهم واموالهم وملّتهم الّا يضاروا ولا ينتقضوا وعلى اهل ارمينية والابواب الطرّاء منهم والتتّاء ومن حولهم فدخل معهم ان ينفروا لكلّ غارة وينفذوا لكلّ امرٍ ناب او لم يَنُب رآه الوالى صلاحاً على ان توضع الجزاء عمن اجاب الى ذلك الّا الحشر والحشر عِوَضٌ من جزائهم ومن استُغني عنه منهم وقعد فعليه مثل ما على اهل آذربيجان من الجزاء والدلالة والنُّزْل يوماً كاملًا فان حشروا وضع ذلك عنهم وان تركوا أخذوا به شهد عبد الرحمان بن ربيعة وسلمان بن ربيعة وبكير بن عبد الله وكتب مَرْضيّ بن مقرّن وشهد.

While M. Jinbashian argues that these treaties are quintessentially Arab in nature, representing the oath (*ḥilf*) of the tribal alliances for "neighborly protection" (*jīwār*),[46] M. Levy-Rubin instead convincingly outlines the major elements of vassal treaties, including the one here for Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband, and points out that such formulaic elements only appear in Arabic treaties pertaining to lands of the Sasanian Empire. In particular, the treaties relating to Armenia and Albania are comparable to those in the eastern parts of the Iranian world. The peace treaty between Suwayd b. Muqarrin and Dihistān and Jurjān, the very treaty that Jinbashian cites ("you pay tribute annually according to your capacity"),[47] which appears only a few pages before the agreement with Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband in Ṭabarī's text, reflects similar terms for another Iranian province: "Any one of you whose help we seek shall pay his tribute in the form of assistance he renders instead of his [regular] tribute,"[48] which appears here as *kharāj*. The Arabic treaties for cities and provinces of the Iranian *oikoumene* retain common threads whether in the North or in the East.

Part of this similarity, as D. Hill points out, is not just a reliance on specific formulae for treaties in the East and the North. Basing his study of the North only on Arabic sources, he argues that "the system of taxation in Armenia, at least in this early period, was similar to that of Khurāsān." He points out that in major cities such as Qālīqalā/Karin, Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, Dabīl/Duin, Baylaqān/P'aytakaran, and Bardhʿa/Partaw, the leaders of the Islamic incursions negotiated with the people of the city directly. He hypothesizes that "the burghers were strong enough to act independently, without reference to the landholding nobility." Yet elsewhere, the "chiefs" or "patricians" negotiated on behalf of their regions. These patricians were responsible for collecting and presenting an unspecified amount of tribute on behalf of the people in their regions.[49] Presumably the factors that Hill identifies as common to both the North and the East are not just the result of the norms of Sasanian-era treaties, but also the underlying realities of the localized power structure and the authority of the nobility.

ʿAbbāsid-era versions of the conquest treaties also point to the concerns of later authors, as we will consider later. Nevertheless, the proverbial kernel of truth is there, if only visible in conjunction with an

[46] Jinbashian 1978, 171; on the relationship between *amān* and *jīwār*, see Levy-Rubin 2011, 32–3.

[47] Ṭabarī 1994, XIV 29, 1893, I 2658: عليكم من الجزاء فى كلّ سنة على قدر طاقتكم

[48] Ṭabarī 1994, XIV 29, 1893, I 2658: ومن استعنّا به منكم فله جزاؤه فى معونته عوضاً من جزائه

[49] Hill 1971, 167.

Umayyad-era Armenian source and in comparison with the texts about other ex-Sasanian provinces of the Iranian *oikoumene*.

THE IMPOSITION OF DIRECT CONTROL UNDER THE MARWĀNIDS AND ʿABBĀSIDS

Even if, with the help of Sebēos, we can isolate certain aspects of actual continuity in the shift from the late Sasanian period into the conquest period, this does not support the conclusion that caliphal taxation was informed by Sasanian antecedents. The circumstances of the conquest period do not represent the norms of caliphal taxation through the eighth and ninth centuries. Instead of continuity, caliphal taxation goes through stages that parallel the political developments in caliphal rule in the North, with the Marwānid Reforms emerging as a significant turning point.

V. Nersessian and S. Melikʻ-Baxšyan, both relying in part on earlier work by H. Zoryan and H. Nalbandyan, divide the taxation policies from the conquest to the ʿAbbāsids as follows: (1) the period of incursions up to Sebēos's Arab-Armenian peace treaty in 652; (2) Muʿāwiya to ʿAbd al-Malik; (3) ʿAbd al-Malik to Hishām; (4) Hishām to the fall of the Umayyads; and (5) the early ʿAbbasid era.[50] Some aspects of this schema are borne out later, but it is here more useful to construe the change in taxation along with changes in administration. Before the Marwānid Reforms, the North paid tribute and had a loose connection to the Caliphate, while after the Marwānid Reforms there are much more virulent diatribes against caliphal taxation, corresponding to a period of much more visible governance in the North.

The Significance of the Marwānid Reforms in the North

A. Ter-Łevondyan argues that, broadly speaking, the North fared better under the Umayyads than under the ʿAbbāsids, when "le système d'exploitation et d'oppression politique était de beaucoup plus perfectionné."[51] In a separate but related topic, he further explains that the difference between Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid rule was explicitly tied to ethnicity and religion: the Umayyads were Arabs, who only tolerated the Armenians because most of the Umayyad Caliphate was not Arab, but

[50] Melikʻ-Baxšyan 1968, 147; Nersessian 1988, 27.

[51] Ter-Łevondyan 1986, 782; This is a general rule of thumb accepted elsewhere, as well. See Toumanoff 1966, 608.

the ʿAbbāsids were "pan-Muslim" with a strong "Persian element." From the ʿAbbāsid Revolution on, Ter-Łevondyan continues, Muslims were less concerned with ethnicity, and "[t]he difference between Arab and non-Arab ceased to exist if the latter were Muslims."[52] While he does not elaborate, this presumably means that Armenians fared poorly under the ʿAbbāsids because they were Christians.

We can and will (in the next chapter) certainly highlight the ʿAbbāsids' co-opted Iranian past, but it remains to be demonstrated that the "Persian" ʿAbbāsids despised Christians enough to allow their apparent intolerance to dictate their relationship with the caliphal North. This is particularly incongruous given that one of the greatest strengths of Ter-Łevondyan's book is the revelation that many of the rebellions against ʿAbbāsid rule in the North were not propagated by Armenian, Georgian, or Albanian Christians, but by Arab and Iranian Muslims trying to secure emirates independent of caliphal control: Isḥāq b. Ismāʿīl b. Shuʿayb, Sawāda b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Yazīd b. Ḥiṣn, Abū Muslim al-Shārī, Sakan b. Mūsā l-Baylaqānī, and Mūsā b. Zurāra, among others.

Sebēos's treaty reflects the circumstances of an early period, specifically the seventh century, in which the Armenians and Albanians were tributary vassals of the Caliphate. This is evident from the terms in Sebēos's treaty, contemporary with the Islamic incursions, which claims that no *tačik amīrs* or armies would settle in Armenia. Dasxuranc'i confirms the fluid circumstances of the conquest period and Albania's tributary status with the explanation that "[w]ith the total decline of the kingdom of Persia and the increasing power of the southern race of the Tačiks, the imposition of tribute became more onerous in the world, above all in the eastern regions," by which he means Albania, as it is east of Armenia. This is not necessarily due to the differences in Sasanian and caliphal taxation levels, though, since Dasxuranc'i specifies that during the conquest period the Arrānshāh "paid tribute to the three nations – the Khazars, the Tačiks (Arabs), and the Romans (Byzantines)." This changed before the Marwānid Reforms, when Varaz-Trdat (r. 680–705) turned from the Greeks and "he gave the land of the east to the Tačiks and paid tribute to them alone."[53]

[52] Ter-Łevondyan 1976a, 21.

[53] Dasxuranc'i 1961, 202–3,1983, 311–12: Ընդ նուազել ի սպառ թագաւորութեանն Պարսից և զօրանալ ազգին հարաւային Տաճկաց սաստկանային սակք հարկահանաց աշխարհի, առաւել կողմանցս արևելից.զի իշխանն Աղուանից Վարազ Տրդատ ընդ երիս հարկէր Խազրաց, Տաճկաց և Հոռոմոց:…և յայնմհետէ ետ զաշխարհս արևելից ի Տաճիկս, և նոցա միայն հարկէր. See also Dasxuranc'i 1961, 202, n. 1: In 685,

The coins attributed to either Step'anoz I (r. 590–627) and Step'anoz II (r. 642–50) serve as a reminder of the blurry shift from late Sasanian rule into the conquest period and perhaps the most memorable argument for the independence of the North in the interregnum. These replicate the portrait of Hormozd IV, but omit the Middle Persian inscription entirely. In the place of the *shāhanshāh*'s regnal dates and name, Stephen abbreviated his own name in Georgian letters. On top of the fire altar, the two attendants service a cross instead of a flame. If we ascribe these coins to Step'anoz II, the Georgian-Sasanian coins are comparable to the Arab-Sasanian coins in that they bridge Sasanian and caliphal rule. Either way, these coins plainly attest the independence afforded the Georgian élite.[54]

After the Marwānid Reforms, though, we enter the period of direct caliphal control over the North, with caliphal governors on the ground who minted aniconic Arabic coins and sent out their own tax collectors (Armenian: *harkapahanǰoł*; Arabic: *ʿāmil* or *ṣāḥib al-kharāj*). The Marwānid Reforms run against all suggestions that common ground between the Sasanians and the ʿAbbāsids could stem from actual continuity. They instituted sweeping changes throughout the Caliphate: administrative languages shifted from Greek and Persian to Arabic, Byzantine- and Sasanian-style coins were replaced with aniconic Arabic coins complete with Qurʾānic allusions, and new standards for weights and measures spread from one end of the Caliphate to the other. The Marwānid Reforms attempted to unify a disparate set of provinces, each with its own or several modi operandi, into a recognizably unified empire. Whereas the early Caliphate was decentralized more frequently than not, these reforms represented a push for centralization across the Islamic world.

Given the Armenian complaints about ʿAbd al-Malik and Hishām's taxation policies, it makes more sense to place the Marwānid Reforms as the instigation for frustration with caliphal rule in the North. The intermittent presence of the Sufyānids and the undemanding tribute to the caliphs had suited the independence of the nobles. Armenian frustration with the Marwānid Reforms, associated with excessively burdensome taxes,

Justinian II and ʿAbd al-Malik signed a treaty to divide the taxes of Armenia and Georgia; Dowsett adds Albania to the list based on this passage; see also Toumanoff 1963, 404.

[54] On whether these coins were minted in the name of Stephen I or Stephen II, Lang 1957, 139, assumes that these were minted by Stephen II; Rapp 2014, 327–9, considers it more likely that these coins were minted by Stephen I, not Stephen II; Toumanoff 1952, 258: "it is extremely difficult to establish who minted them"; Tsotselia 2009 also prefers Stephen I.

changed the way that Armenians wrote about caliphal control over the North. Łewond, who lived in the late Marwānid and the early ʿAbbāsid North, complains that "the sons of Ishmael … tortured the men through the collection of taxes" during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik.[55] This is in sharp contrast to the "profound peace"[56] of Muʿāwiya's reign.

Modern studies suggested that the ʿAbbāsid Revolution was "a major watershed in the situation of Armenia,"[57] claiming that the autonomy allowed to the Armenians under the Umayyads was not matched in the ʿAbbāsid period, but since Ter-Łevondyan's opus was published, Islamicists have been more careful to distinguish between Sufyānid and Marwānid rule. With the Marwānid Reforms came the creation of the caliphal provinces of the North, replacing vassalage and tributary status with direct rule. This coincided with the arrival of caliphal governors on the ground in Dabīl/Duin and Bardhʿa/Partaw, the collection of taxes under the supervision of caliphal administrators,[58] the regulation of weights and measures in the markets,[59] and the censuses to use as a baseline for taxes.

We also find caliphal armies on the ground in the North, led by celebrated and well-connected Arab generals, despite Muʿāwiya's promise, according to Sebēos, that the Arabs would not keep armies in the North. The reliance on Armenian cavalry remained, but the Armenians may well have been entered into the *dīwān* in the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik.[60] After the Marwānid Reforms, caliphal representatives paid the cavalry stipends, exacting taxes from the population instead of waiving tribute in exchange for military aid. So, for example, Łewond has the *išxan Hayocʿ* Ašot Bagratuni complain to Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–43) that the Armenian cavalry had not been paid in three years. Hishām paid the

[55] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 14v: զարսն հարկապահանջութեամբ խոշտանգէին; Łewond 1857, 38.

[56] Garsoïan 2012b, 30.

[57] Garsoïan 2012b, XI, n. 15; Greenwood 2000, 275–6.

[58] Laurent & Canard 1980, 204: the Armenians retained a role in collecting taxes, but in the ʿAbbāsid period we hear of the *dīwān al-ḍiyaʿ* in the North; on the later period, see Minorsky 1958, 118.

[59] Ter-Łevondyan 1984, 212 re: Marwānid imposition of regulations in Bardhʿa/Partaw; Balādhurī 1866, 206.

[60] Considerable caution is necessary here. The references to the *dīwān* are tied into the story of the fires of Nashawā/Naxčawan, where the caliphal representatives tricked the *naxarar*s by pretending that their names would be entered into the *dīwān* when instead this was a ruse to get the nobles and their cavalry into one place. Still, it is worth noting as a possibility because Dasxuranc'i also mentions that the Armenians were entered into the *dīwān* during the Caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik and he does not connect this event to the fires. See Vacca 2016.

arrears and their salary was met throughout the rest of his reign.[61] The Marwānids certainly did not hold to the conquest-era agreements.[62]

The *naxarar*s chafed under the imposition of direct rule, so it is now, after the Marwānid Reforms, that we see the Armenian rebellion soon after the *fitna* of Ibn al-Zubayr and Muḥammad b. Marwān's subsequent burning of the churches in Nashawā/Naxčawan. Armenian frustration had little to do with whether the caliphs were Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid, Arab or Persian, but rather how much control they expected to exert over the affairs of the North. Marwānid rule in this context can hardly be differentiated from early ʿAbbāsid rule, so it is hard to believe that ethnicity and religion were the primary factors that shaped caliphal rule in the North. Instead, the problems were imperial ambitions and efforts at centralization that infringed on the independence of the local nobility.

Treaties and Taxation under the Marwānids

Sebēos's seventh-century text allows us to hypothesize about actual continuity from Sasanian rule into the period of Islamic incursions, but most of the treaties and data on caliphal taxation cannot support the suggestion of continuity into the Marwānid and ʿAbbāsid periods. Armenian and Arabic sources record treaties between the Marwānids and the peoples of the North. Even when making explicit claims to continuity, these suggest that the fiscal relationship between the Caliphate and the North changed considerably in the wake of the reforms.

Łewond mentions a "written oath"[63] that Muḥammad b. Marwān, the brother of ʿAbd al-Malik, gave to the Armenians at the request of the

[61] Łewond 1857, 143–4.

[62] The arrangement involving the cavalry may have changed again under the early ʿAbbāsids, or at least under Saffāḥ. Łewond claims that "the yearly salary of silver that came to the Armenian troops from the royal treasury was cut"; Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 95v: հատաւ սակ արծաթոյն որ գայր ամի ամի յարքունուստ զաւրացն հայոց. This implies that the cavalry were not in fact paid. Yet this is inconclusive because Łewond immediately continues this statement to the effect that "there was a tax on their own houses to equip the regiments of the arms and to keep uninterrupted the progress of profitless labor"; Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 96r: և հարկ լինէր ի տանց իւրեանց հանդերձել զգունդս զաւրացն. և զընթացս զ[.]րավաստակ աշխատութեանցն ողջ պահել: In other words, Łewond is in fact complaining because the cavalry was maintained through the taxation of their own houses, i.e., that they cannot make money in this situation.

[63] This appears elsewhere in Łewond, such as when ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ḥātim offered the Armenians "a written oath, as per their custom"; see Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 27r: և տայր նոցա գիր երդմամբ չափ

catholicos Sahak, as seen at the start of this chapter. While we do not have details about the amount of taxes, this eighth-century source does conform to the ninth-century treaties, offering protection of religion, lives, and property in exchange for recognizing caliphal power and paying taxes. Much of this, notably the *amān* for lives, religion, and property, was missing from the only contemporary conquest-era treaty preserved in Sebēos's *History*, presumably because it promised no caliphal interference on the ground in the North and so hardly necessitated a promise to allow Christianity. While T'ēodoros Ṙštuni did not need to vouchsafe Christianity, Sahak did because Sufyānid and Marwānid rule were markedly different in the North.

The only extant Arabic treaty between the Georgians and Arabs purporting to be from the Marwānid period is between Jarrāḥ b. ʿAbd Allāh l-Ḥakamī and the people of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, preserved in Balādhurī's *Conquests of the Lands*. Balādhurī produces side by side the purported text of both the initial conquest-era treaty between Ḥabīb b. Maslama and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi and the subsequent treaty between Jarrāḥ and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi. The first fits neatly in Levy-Rubin's "vassal" treaties: the inhabitants of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi are promised *amān* for their lives, possessions, and religion in exchange for the submission to taxation (*bi-ṣaghār al-jizya*) in the amount of one dinar per household. Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi must supply aid, including food and lodging, to the Muslims in face of their enemies (a common stipulation, but here possibly a reference to the frontier). Interestingly, the treaty breaks from the norm by stipulating that the Arabs were not required to protect the city if they were engaged elsewhere, leaving the locals to protect the frontier on their own. The treaty also offers more legal restrictions to taxation than is usual, by specifying that families and administrators could not manipulate the definition of "households" (*ahl al-buyūtāt*) and by mentioning that converts could be freed from the *jizya*.[64] We might see the concerns of ʿAbbāsid-era traditionists in the legalistic details, although it remains possible that the Arabic treaties are an echo of how Sasanian *shāh*s dealt with their own vassals, since a

ըստ սովորութեանն իւրեանց; Ł. 1857, 59. While this passage does not mention taxation, it does corroborate the significance of written treaties between Armenians and caliphal representatives in the Umayyad period.

[64] Balādhurī 1866, 201; see Ghazarian 1904, 166–7; Thopdschian 1904a, 69. See Ckit'išvili 1985 for an extended discussion of the scholarship on this first treaty, covering the sources, date, and geographical reach of the agreement.

Sasanian-era Armenian source also stipulates that the Sasanians remitted taxes for Albanians who converted to Zoroastrianism.[65]

Balādhurī's second treaty, the Marwānid-era treaty between Jarrāḥ and Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi, is a bit cagier. In it, Jarrāḥ claims to have seen the agreement between Ḥabīb b. Maslama and the people of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi and he accordingly promises to retain the taxes at 100 dirhams per annum on the vineyards and mills in the surrounding areas.[66] The original treaty, at least as recorded in Balādhurī's text, says nothing of the sort. In other words, either Jarrāḥ or Balādhurī is explicitly claiming continuity by promising to uphold the agreements from the conquest period, while at the same time changing the type of tribute expected of Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi. Whereas Ḥabīb requires a poll tax (*jizya*), Jarrāḥ instead or in addition demands land tax (*kharāj*). Since the treaties were reproduced one after the other in Balādhurī's text, the difference is striking. The text is responding to ʿAbbāsid-era concerns, notably the development of the definition of *jizya* and *kharāj*, but if we read it in conjunction with the contemporary Armenian evidence, it may also reflect the Marwānid-era attempts at centralization. Should Tiflīs/Tp'ilisi follow the example of other caliphal provinces, the switch to *kharāj* lands was accompanied by an increase in the involvement of caliphal representatives on the ground to collect the taxes, rather than leaving the process to the local élite.[67]

Corroborating contemporary Syriac sources on the Marwānid *taʿdīl*,[68] Łewond's history attests land censuses in the Marwānid period, indicating that the Caliphate was attempting a much more centralized tax policy than anything known in the Sufyānid period.[69] So, for example, Łewond

[65] Ełišē 1982, 121.

[66] Balādhurī 1866, 202: وكتب الجرّاح بن عبد الله الحكمى لاهل تفليس كتاباً نسخته. بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم هذا كتاب من الجرّاح بن عبد الله لاهل تفليس من رستاق منجليس من كورة جرزان انّه اتوني بكتاب امان لهم من حبيب بن مسلمة على الاقرار بصغار الجزية وانّه صالحهم على ارضين لهم وكروم وارحاء يقال لها اوارى وسابينا من رستاق منجليس وعن طعام وديدونا من رستاق قحويط من كورة جرزان على ان يؤدّوا عن هده الارحاء والكروم فى كلّ سنة مائة درهم بلا ثانية .فانفذت لهم امانهم وصلحهم وامرت الايراد عليهم فمن قرئ عليه كتابى فلا يتعدّ ذلك فيهم ان شاء الله وكتب

[67] Dennett 1950, 48.

[68] Robinson 2000, 45.

[69] This push for centralization, though, seems to be short-lived. Soon after this account, Łewond 1857, 149–50, discusses taxation that pressed the population of Armenia too far; their cries were heard by the caliphal governor of the North, Isahak, or Isḥāq b. Muslim al-ʿUqaylī, who put a stop to these taxes. This suggests that the local governors had a say in the taxation policies and, more importantly, that the taxes were originally organized and extracted on a local level, without even the supervision of the caliphal governor.

noted that Šam, or Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik, sent Hertʿ, Ḥārith b. ʿAmr b. Ḥaraja l-Ṭāʾī, to the North:

> to conduct a census of the land of the Armenians in order to intensify the iron yoke of servitude of taxation by means of manifold evils because he was vexed by the goodness of Omaṙ [the caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz], as if he had unjustly spent the stores of the treasury that the princes before him had amassed. And so much danger came upon our land until everyone sighed over the tumultuous tribulations, on account of which there was no place to live due to intolerable dangers.[70]

The censuses and tax collectors on the ground in the North, in addition to the squabbles about the payment due to Armenian cavalry, suggest that the agreements of the conquest period are long since out of date by the eighth century.

Taxation in the ʿAbbāsid Period

The Arabic sources may indeed inform us about the concerns of the ʿAbbāsid period, notably: the interest in the caliph's role in the Islamic conquests, Umayyad involvement in military campaigns in and subsequent claims over the North, the definition of *jizya* and *kharāj*, and the status of the *dhimma*. The echoes of ʿAbbāsid concerns buried in the treaties purporting to be from the conquest or Umayyad periods are more telling than ʿAbbāsid-era accounts of ʿAbbāsid taxation. Moving into the ʿAbbāsid period, there are certainly far more sources, but these preserve details that are difficult to use.

Beyond the conquest treaties and the few references to Umayyad-era taxes, there are disjointed, sporadic comments about ʿAbbāsid-era taxation in the Arabic sources. Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ lists Armenian taxes at 12,000,000 dirhams; this is *en par* with the much later account in Ibn Khaldūn, who counts Armenian taxation at 13,000,000 during the reign

[70] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 73r–73v: խորհուրդ վատ ի մէջ առեալ առաքեր զոմն զաւրավար որում անուն էր հերթ. աշխարհագիր առնել ընդ աշխարհս հայոց վասն ծանրացուցանելոյ զանուր լծոյ ծառայութեան հարկատրութեան ազգի ազգի չարեաւք որպէս զի դժուարելով ընդ բարէմտութիւնն ոմառայ. էթէ անիրաւութեամբ ծախեաց զմթերս գանձուցն զորս համբարեալ էր իշխանացն որ յառաջ քան զնա. և բազում վտանգ հասուցաներ աշխարհիս. մինչ զի ամենեցուն հառաչել ի վերա անհանգիստ նեղութեանցն. յորմէ ոչ գոյր ապրել ումեք յանհնարին վտանգիցն; Łewond 1857, 130. See also Ter-Łevondyan 1986, 781, which cites a comparable passage in Dasxuranc'i's *History of the Albanians*.

of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–808). Ibn Khurradādhbih, though, records taxation at 4,000,000 dirhams from 836 to 851, which is comparable to Qudāma b. Jaʿfar's figure for the period between 819 and 851, except that the later also claims that Arzan/Arcn and Mayyāfāriqīn/Npʿrkert separately pay 4,200,000 dirhams and Ṭārūn/Tarōn, 100,000. This becomes even more muddled when we consider the figures provided by the other tenth-century geographers, as Ibn al-Faqīh claims that taxes reached 2,033,985 dirhams per annum and Ibn Ḥawqal, 10,000,000.

This range is so dramatic that it is hard to divine which report to trust. Ibn Ḥawqal's enumeration of tax revenues from the North presents another difficulty, and a partial response to the problem. Ibn Ḥawqal claims that Armenia paid 10,000,000 dirhams in his time, but his list only adds up to the more believable 5,750,000 dirhams. Yet in this list, he specifies the amount of taxes paid by banū l-Dayrānī, literally: the sons of Derenik, the Arabic name for the Arcrunis, who at that time were independent rulers of the kingdom of Vaspurakan.[71] The mention of the Arcruni kingdom, in conjunction with a number of other details such as the separation of Bagratuni territories from *amīrate*s as seen in Chapter 2, places his data (and perhaps the other counts surpassing 10,000,000 dirhams?) chronologically. These data should be set aside as valuable information for the period after direct caliphal control.

C. Robinson determined that Ibn Khurradādhbih and Qudāma presented the most credible data for Mawṣil.[72] If this holds true for the North, excluding Arzan/Arcn and Mayyāfāriqīn/Npʿrkert, taxes under ʿAbbāsid control amounted to approximately 4 million dirhams. Yet the exclusion of Arzan/Arcn and Mayyāfāriqīn/Npʿrkert also dates these texts. Qudāma's data may well refer to the territorial divides under the Ḥamdānids, but Ibn Khurradādhbih's text is too early for this to refer to Ḥamdānid control. This likely refers to the separation of the Shaybānī *amīrate* from the North after the death of Mutawakkil. Again, we cannot identify any particular tax revenue to the period of direct caliphal control with any certainty.

It is possible that the caliphal representatives did indeed increase taxation as they took over other provinces, comparable to M. Morony's assessment that taxation increased in Iraq following the transition from Sasanian to caliphal rule. J. Laurent and M. Canard come to the opposite

[71] Laurent & Canard 1980, 203 and 668–70; Ghazarian 1904, 204–6; Laurent & Canard 1980, 203 and 668–70; Minorsky 1953a, 527–9; Nersessian 1988, 28–31; Ter-Łevondyan 1969a = Ter-Łevondyan 1976c.

[72] Robinson 2000, 82.

conclusion: taxation in the ninth-century North was more lenient than in the eighth-century North.[73] Proving an increase or decrease in the levels of taxation in the ʿAbbāsid period is problematic in the case of the North due to four main reasons. First, as we saw in Chapter 2, the definition of Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan in the Arabic accounts is certainly not static. There is no reliable way to clarify what "Armenia" means in, for example, Ibn Khurradādhbih's reference to 4,000,000 dirhams in taxes from Armenia. Second, we do not have data about the specific intake during the Sasanian or conquest periods, or sufficient knowledge about the administrative geography to make a direct comparison.[74] Third, the accounts demonstrate significant discrepancies throughout the period of caliphal control. M. Ghazarian noted that the Armenian sources do not give us any sense about the amount of taxes over time;[75] the Arabic sources do, in contrast, furnish details and, as in the case of Ibn Khurradādhbih, these were provided by administrators who had access to official archives and tax documentation. The problem, as Ibn Ḥawqal's data demonstrate, is that we must verify which period, specifically, is meant in each account. Finally, the numbers provided in some of these historical accounts beggar belief, leaving us with the sense that our sources are either unreliable or only intermittently reliable.[76] Dennett put it most succinctly:

> Without much difficulty one can collect enough miscellaneous information from a variety of sources to cover several pages with figures. Unfortunately, the arrangement of these figures in a geographical-chronological system does not bring order out of confusion or permit one to draw any important deductions beyond the conviction that the miscellaneous notices are in many cases inaccurate and all of them unreliable.[77]

Yet we know enough to establish that there were changes in caliphal taxation under the ʿAbbāsids. In particular, there were a few places where the terms of the conquest-era treaties apparently continued through the Marwānid period, eliciting complaints when the ʿAbbāsid governors changed the long-standing terms of the agreements.

Armenians, as we saw previously, provided cavalry for the caliphal army in the conquest period, but this changed under Marwānid rule when they were likely entered into the *dīwān*. Yet Ibn Aʿtham preserves an interesting

[73] Laurent & Canard 1980, 203.
[74] Bounyatov 1972, 322.
[75] Ghazarian 1904, 204.
[76] Robinson 2000, 82.
[77] Dennett 1939, 71–2.

anecdote that reveals that the Albanians continued to expect the remission of taxation in exchange for military service. Saʿīd b. Salm al-Bāhilī, the caliphal representative in Bardhʿa/Partaw (797–9), appointed Naṣr b. ʿInān over Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband along with a *mawlā* of Faḍl b. Yaḥyā named Ḥārith, who was responsible for tax collection. The people of the city came to Naṣr b. ʿInān and said: "O *amīr*! Indeed, *kharāj* has never been taken from this city of ours because it is slaughtering the enemy and its people are battling the Khazars. The *amīr* Saʿīd b. Salm dispatched Ḥārith the *mawlā* of Faḍl b. Yaḥyā l-Barmakī in order to take our *kharāj*." Naṣr b. ʿInān replied that he did not think it acceptable to remit the *kharāj* for the people of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband and insisted on its collection, sparking a rebellion in the North that saw the beheading of both Naṣr (at the hands of the people of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband) and Najm b. Hāshim, *ṣāḥib* Bāb al-Abwāb (at the hands of Saʿīd b. Salm).[78] This anecdote serves as a reminder of the regional specificity of caliphal rule, which could hardly have been uniform over the entire North, and of the changes in taxation policies under the ʿAbbāsid governors.

Another change visible in the taxation of the North includes the payment of taxes in kind. Armenians paid taxes in kind to the caliphs as they had once paid the Byzantines and Sasanians. Many Armenian and Arabic texts enumerate the various goods sent as tribute, including fish, cloth, falcons, mules, and carpets.[79] As A. Ter-Łevondyan points out, though, during the Sasanian and Sufyānid periods, Armenians submitted taxes in kind that helped maintain the army. This changed with in the ʿAbbāsid period: "À l'époque des Abbassides le blé, la musette, la corde et le gant ne sont plus cités; par contre on exige principalement du poisson et des articles de luxe pour la cour, où l'on vit dans l'opulence."[80] Again, there are demonstrable changes in caliphal taxation policies in the ʿAbbāsid period that cannot be easily traced.

[78] Ibn Aʿtham 1975, VIII 257: فقام أهل المدينة □لى نصر بن عنان فقالوا: أيها الأمير! □ن مدينتنا هذه لم يؤخذ منها خراج قط لأنها فى نحر العدو وأهلها يحاربون الخزر والأمير سعيد بن سلم قد وجه الحارث مولى الفضل بن يحيى البرمكى ليأخذ خراجنا فاكتب إليه كتابا فى ذلك. فقال نصر بن عنان: إذا لا أكتب إليه كتابا فى ذلك والرأي عندى أنكم تؤدون خراجكم، فان أمير المؤمنين الرشيد لا يحتمل لأحد كثير الخراج!; Yaʿqūbī 1883, II 518, preserves references to this rebellion, but not the mention of the *kharāj*. He supplies the title *ṣāḥib al-bāb wa-l-abwāb* for Najm b. Hāshim.

[79] For lists of taxes in kind, see Ghazarian 1904, 206; Ter-Łevondyan 1969a = Ter-Łevondyan 1976c. On the precedence for this practice, see Kaegi 1994, 36–8: "When examined from the perspective of Islamic traditions, these appear to be authentic and represented continuity with late Roman fiscal institutions, for that is why they receive mention in Egypt, Syria, and areas of former Byzantine Mesopotamia." For paying taxes in kind in the East, see Luce 2009, 119.

[80] Ter-Łevondyan 1969a, 55 = Ter-Łevondyan 1976c, 316.

SASANIAN TAXATION, SYRIAC SOURCES, AND IRANIAN SOCIAL MORES

If ʿAbbāsid-era sources reveal little serviceable information about ʿAbbāsid taxation, we can at least ascertain that there was no continuity from Sasanian rule into early ʿAbbāsid period. Returning to the question of how Sasanian legacy (not antecedents) informed the description of ʿAbbāsid taxation, we need to turn back to the Armenian sources.

If we compare the mechanisms of Sasanian, Marwānid, and ʿAbbāsid collection of taxes based on Armenian sources alone, there is a much stronger sense of continuity. We saw earlier that the *shāhanshāh*s and caliphs collected land taxes, capitation taxes, and taxes in kind, but many other commonalities exist between the fiscal policies of the Sasanian Empire and the Caliphate, as described in Armenian texts. The Sasanians organized censuses (*ašxarhagirk*ʿ) to monitor the appropriate levels of taxation. So, for example, Ełišē's fifth-century text complains that Yazdegerd sent "one of his trusted servants" to Armenia to conduct a census, claiming that the census taker was hypocritical and that "his plans were revealed as evil."[81] The censuses also appear under the Marwānids, as we saw that Hishām sent his governor to Armenia to conduct a census in order to increase taxation "by means of manifold evils."[82] These censuses were organized by the *dīwān* (դիւան to render دیوان) in the provincial capitals, which remained for the most part at Dabīl/Dwin and Bardhʿa/Partaw.[83] Łewond even continues to refer to Bardhʿa/Partaw by the word *šahastan* (Middle Persian: *šahrastān*).[84] We have already seen the reliance on local cavalry during and after Sasanian rule. The Sasanians and the caliphs sent tax collectors to the provinces to evaluate and collect taxes, who relied on the local élite to send taxes to the capitals.[85] We even have a tenth-century Armenian text that claims that Kavād I exempted Armenians from taxes

[81] Ełišē 1982, 75, 1989, 44: Զմի ոմն ի հաւատարիմ ծառայից իւրոց ի գորց առաքէր յերկիրն Հայոց որում անունն էր Դենշապուհ.որ եկեալ հասեալ հրամանաւ արքունի, զողջոյն բերեալ զմեծ թագաւորին, և խաղաղասէր կեղծաւորութեամբ աշխարագիր առնել ամենայն երկրին Հայոց ի թողութիւն հարկաց և թեթևութիւն ծանրութեան այ րուձիոյն: Թէպէտ և ի վերին երեսս կեղծաւորէր, այլ ի ներքոյ խորհուրդք չարագոյն ցուցանէին: Another reference to Sasanian censuses appears in the later Dasxuranc'i 1961, 104.

[82] Łewond 1857, 130.

[83] Sebēos 1979, 67.

[84] Łewond 1857, 145; on *šahastan*, see Hübschmann 1908, 209.

[85] T'ovma Arcruni 1985b, 124, for the Sasanians; Łewond 1857, 201–2.

for three years,[86] just as Sebēos's treaty between Muʿāwiya and T'ēodoros Ṙštuni stipulates.

These descriptions of Sasanian, Marwānid, and ʿAbbāsid rule rely on the assumption of centralizing policies and reflect the glare from personalities such as Anūshirwān and ʿAbd al-Malik as they were remembered in the moment of political fragmentation of the tenth century. They contrast sharply with the decentralized and loose "diversity of early tribute taking in the north"[87] and nostalgia for Sufyānid rule in both Armenian and Syriac sources.

Armenian historians decry caliphal taxation in a fashion that finds common ground with the Syriac literature. In particular, Łewond's eighth-century *Book of History* explains that Abdla, better known as Manṣūr,

> tormented everyone with many afflictions and tribulations. He caused extreme impoverishment to the point of exacting taxes even from the dead. He afflicted all of the many orphans and widows cruelly and tormented the priests and servants of the divine altar with tortures, ridicule, and whippings to make them reveal the names of the dead and their families. He also tortured the inhabitants of this land with very forceful and grievous tax collection, taking many *zuzēs* [Armenian զուզէ to render the Syriac ܙܘܙ] of silver per capita and placing a lead seal around everyone's necks.[88]

These same concerns, taxing the dead and harassing the priests, also appear in Syriac sources about the Umayyad period and it is likely here, rather than earlier Armenian sources, that Łewond found his inspiration. The late seventh-century Syriac apocalypse of Ps. Methodius complains that the Arabs exacted *jizya* even from the dead: "They will be so elated in their wrath and pride that he will even demand tribute from the dead who lie in the dust. He will take a capitation tax from orphans, from widows,

[86] Dasxuranc'i 1961, 92.

[87] Robinson 2000, 47.

[88] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 94v–95r: ԵՒ Տիրէ ընդ նորա աբդլա. եւ առաքէ զեղբայր իւր զմիւս աբդլա. շրջել ընդ *ամենայն* աշխարհս իւրոյ իշխանութե*ան*ն. որ նախ ելեալ յաշխարհս հայոց. բազում վշտաւք և նեղութե*ամ*բք վտանգէր զամենեսին. և հասուցանէր ի չքաւորութի*ւն* տնանկութե*ան*. մինչև պահանջել հարկս և ի մեռելոցն: զ*ամենայն* բազմութի*ւն* որբոց և այրեաց չարալլուկ տառապեցուցանէր, վտանգէր զքահանայս և զպաշտաւնեայս. ա*ստուա*ծային խորանին. խոշտանգանաւք և քըքաւք այպանութե*ան*. և գանիւք ի յայտ ածել զանուանս վախճանելոցն և զընդանիս նոցուն. խոշտանգէր և զբնակիչս աշխարհիս բռնագոյն և դառն հարկապահանջութե*ամ*բ առնուլ ըստ գլխոյ բազում զուզէս արծաթոյ. և դնել կնիք կապարեայ յամենեցուն պարանոցս; Łewond 1857, 158–9.

and from holy men."[89] This passage informed Łewond's account, as he puts taxing the dead alongside the lamentable fate of orphans, widows, and clergy. It remains to be demonstrated whether Łewond was working with an early Armenian translation at such an early date. Although some scholars have suggested that Ps. Methodius circulated in Armenian from the eighth century, there is no concrete evidence for this.[90] In the context of Łewond's text, there is little to support the argument for textual transmission. The brief passage reminiscent of Ps. Methodius appears next to references of neck-sealing (far more common in Syriac sources than Armenian) and the Armenian qnıqէ to render the Syriac word ܛܘܒ. It makes more sense to assume that Łewond's complaints about caliphal taxation are informed by Syriac informants or sources, whether orally or textually transmitted.

Łewond refers to the practice of neck-sealing, hanging lead seals around the necks of the Christian populace in order to demonstrate that they paid their taxes and concurrently to humiliate them. He mentions this practice in Armenia both here and under Sulēman, or Sulaymān [b. Yazīd] b. Aṣamm al-ʿAmirī, the governor of Albania in Bardhʿa/Partaw from 788 to 790 who "sent tax collectors to various regions in this land and ordered them to exact double the yearly tax and to gather it all at once … He gave lead seals to put on everyone's necks. For one seal he exacted many *zuza*s up to the point of bringing the people to abject poverty from the insupportable tribulations by the cruel executioner."[91] In both references to neck-sealing (and nowhere else), Łewond uses the Syriac ܛܘܒ.

There are references to neck-sealing in the Byzantine Empire, but this applied only to the poor and to official envoys, who wore the seals as a form of official identification;[92] there are no references to this practice in Armenian texts about Byzantine rule. Modern scholarship has

[89] Brock 1976, 34; Palmer 1993, 233; Penn 2015, 120; Robinson 2000, 49. For the Armenian version of this passage, see Topchyan 2016, 40.

[90] The earliest version of Ps. Methodius in Armenian is from Stepʿannos Ōrbelean, who preserved part of the Greek version of the apocalypse in Armenian in the thirteenth century. See Thomson 2005, 42. Topchyan 2016 presents the Armenian reading with references to the Greek in footnotes, but he believes the Armenian version to be early.

[91] Łewond, ed. & trans. La Porta & Vacca (in preparation), Matenadaran 1902, 128v: որոյ անդէն յղեալ ընդ կողմանս կողմանս աշխարհիս պահանջող. և տուեալ հրաման կրկին քան զոր ըստ ամին պահանջէին. ի միում վայրկենի հաւաքել … և տայր կնիք կապարեա/յ\ դնել յամենեցուն պարանոցն. և առ մի կնիք. պահանջէր բազում զուզայս. մինչև հասանել մարդկան յետին տնանկութիւն յանհամբեր նեղութեանցն առ ի չարաշուք դահճէն: Łewond 1857, 201–2.

[92] Robinson 2005, 406–7; Soucek 2002.

traditionally understood neck-sealing as a legacy of Sasanian taxation policies, suggesting that taxpayers may have been expected to wear seals around their necks as a symbol of subservience. As M. Morony points out, "[t]he sealing of taxpayers thus was a form of degradation symbolizing the mortgage of their freedom to the state until the entire amount levied had been paid."[93] This practice continued under caliphal rule in Egypt and Iraq,[94] and P. Soucek published examples of surviving tax seals from ʿAbbāsid Egypt.[95] A. Kʿalantʿaryan has demonstrated that the seals from the Sasanian period found in Armenia resemble those from the period of caliphal control and argues that they "were directly connected with taxation,"[96] though he did not produce tax seals comparable to the Egyptian examples or elaborate on the nature of their use.

In a more recent study of neck-sealing practices, C. Robinson challenges this traditional interpretation and argues that

> [A]lthough neck-sealing in general had a pre-Islamic tradition that was as long as it is unattractive, the practice of neck-sealing for the purpose of levying taxes on subject populations was apparently unprecedented in the pre-Islamic Near East … unlike the *technology* of sealing in general or the conventions of élite document sealing, both of which can be explained in terms of more or less simple continuity, neck-sealing for taxing purposes cannot.[97]

His analysis of Arabic and Syriac sources suggests that sealing is the remnant of an Iranian tradition to keep track of prisoners and slaves.[98] In this vein, we read in the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* that Mūsā b. Muṣʿab "appointed another agent to brand and stamp people on their neck like slaves."[99] The point was not that the seal bearers had paid their taxes so much as that their position was comparable to slavery. Neck-sealing for taxation, therefore, is not strictly speaking a legacy of Sasanian taxation policies, but rather an adaptation of a preexisting practice designed to symbolize the subjugation of local populations to caliphal rule. In particular, it matches the textual evidence that submitting to taxes was humiliation, *ṣaghār*.

[93] Morony 1984, 112.
[94] Morony 1984, 123; Soucek 2002, 252–3.
[95] Soucek 2002, 252–3.
[96] Kʿalantʿaryan 1982, 62.
[97] Robinson 2005, 405.
[98] Robinson 2005, 411.
[99] Robinson 2005, 412. See *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* 1999, 236, no. 1: "Narrationes variae 336:3–5 [263]: In Amida, time of Mūsā son of Muṣʿab. According to this source the tokens placed around the necks of people were meant to 'crush them, mock them, and insult them.'"; Levy-Rubin 2016, 164.

Again, the assertion of actual continuity between Sasanian and caliphal taxation policies is problematic. While Arabic sources reveal much more concern about the humiliation involved in submission to taxation, the references to neck-sealing in Łewond's history tap into the same idea. The assumption that neck-sealing intended to differentiate and thereby to humiliate the local populations finds its roots in Iranian social mores, specifically regarding *ghiyār* or "distinguishing marks." The caliphal expectation that societal divisions should be clearly visible is an inheritance of Sasanian-era Iranian cultural norms,[100] and not fiscal policy. Here we see that caliphal adaptation of Sasanian legacy was not simply a question of continuity,[101] but rather an innovative response to the numerous practices in the Near East, the local circumstances in each province, and the goals of the caliphal governors.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter considers caliphal taxation in the North by looking at Armenian and Arabic treaties for information on taxes during the conquest, Umayyad, and ʿAbbāsid periods. It suggests two main periods: (1) when Armenia and Albania were vassal states that paid intermittent tribute dependent on the diverse agreements between the caliphal and the local élite, fashioned after Sasanian antecedents; and (2) when Armenia and Albania, following the Marwānid Reforms, became caliphal provinces and caliphal representatives played a much more pronounced role in the collection of taxes. Accordingly, the Marwānid Reforms emerge as a highly significant determinant of Armenian perceptions of caliphal

[100] Levy-Rubin 2011, 167: "The concept of *ghiyār* or "distinguishing marks" was in fact an established principle in Persian society, where "a visible and general *distinction*" had to be made between men of noble birth and common people with regard to horses, clothes, ornaments, houses and gardens, women and servants, drinking-places, sitting- and standing-places. The Muslims had therefore adopted concepts, values, and status symbols from Sasanian society, and used them as a means of establishing their own superiority." See also Levy-Rubin 2016, especially 161–2; for a contrasting perspective, see Yarbrough 2016 in the same volume.

[101] Yarbrough 2014 takes issue with some of Levy-Rubin's argument, but his discussion on the Sasanian precedence is (121) most relevant here. He questions whether the *ghiyār* is indeed evidence of a continuation of religious norms from the Sasanian into the Islamic periods or if it instead demonstrates the concerns of a later generation as the ʿAbbāsids reinvented the Sasanians. In the case of the caliphal North, we have no data to support the continuation of a Sasanian practice, as the references to neck-sealing are only ʿAbbāsid and other *ghiyār* restrictions do not appear at all.

rule. Even though we find some common ground between Sasanian and post-Marwānid taxation policies, the moments of decentralization (especially the conquest and Sufyānid periods) mean that this cannot be attributed to actual continuity. Instead, the cultural grounding of caliphal fiscal policies is located primarily in Iranian social mores, which inform the reinterpretation of Sasanian-era cultural norms into fiscal policy.

7

Collective Historical Amnesia

The Case for a Parthian Intermezzo

This book establishes several main points about the memory of eighth- and ninth-century caliphal rule in Armenia and Caucasian Albania. First, we cannot understand caliphal rule in Armenia and Albania without reference to the regions' ties to Iran. The North was part of the Iranian *oikoumene*, a diverse cultural zone that shared certain perceptions of the past and expressions of legitimacy. Second, Arabic and Armenian sources suggest that caliphal rule in the North, like elsewhere in the Iranian *oikoumene*, was understood as a continuation of Sasanian norms. In particular, Khurāsān presents a productive point of comparison. Third, many of our sources on both Sasanian and caliphal rule in the North were written in the tenth century during the Iranian intermezzo, which colors how these authors described legitimacy and power. Since tenth-century kings and *amīr*s across the Iranian *oikoumene* (including the North) claimed to be *shāhanshāh*s, the description of Sasanian and caliphal rule based on this model may say more about the tenth century than about the eighth or ninth centuries. Finally, the position of Armenia and Albania along the Byzantine and Khazar frontiers also informed the Arabic and Armenian descriptions of the North. Claiming continuity meant staking a claim in hotly contested territories precisely at the moment when Byzantium was making inroads against the North in the tenth century.

All of this suggests that administrative continuity from Sasanian to caliphal rule was a perception, not a reality. If we had to speak of the caliphal North *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, we have seen indications, first, that the Marwānid Reforms challenge significantly any suggestion of administrative continuity. Second, caliphal rule was decentralized with

considerable independence of the local élite, even allowing for intermittent centralizing policies. Third, caliphal rule was a combination of Byzantine, Sasanian, and local practices. The élite maneuvered through the tangle of conflicting local inheritances in order to take what worked and to refashion it based on their own needs. Finally, in this, the administrative and cultural contact (both Muslim and Christian) between Armenia and Mesopotamia was central, if rarely explicitly mentioned in our sources.

The political circumstances across the Iranian *oikoumene* during the intermezzo informed Arabic and Armenian descriptions of both Sasanian and caliphal legitimacy, such that caliphal rule appears to be a seamless continuation of pre-Islamic norms under Persian control and "the domain of the Iranians" (*Ērānšahr*) seems to shift more or less seamlessly into the "kingdom of Islam" (*mamlakat al-islām*). That said, plenty of threads dangle out of this theory to suggest that the transition was not quite so neat or tidy. This final chapter tugs at a few of the loose ends in order to hypothesize about the layers of history and claims to legitimacy that were lost in the process of what P. Pourshariati calls "collective historical amnesia."[1]

COMPETING CLAIMS TO SASANIAN POWER

The ʿAbbāsids, like the Umayyads before them, embarked on a program to assert claims of centralized power similar to the Sasanian antecedents, actively co-opting an Iranian presence that was specifically Sasanian. The Umayyads positioned themselves as heirs to both the Byzantine and the Sasanian empires. Yazīd b. Walīd (r. 744) once famously boasted, "I am the son of Kisrā and my father is Marwān and Qayṣar is my grandfather and my [other] grandfather is Khāqān."[2] This identifies the caliph as an heir to Sasanian, Arab, Byzantine and Turkic rule. The Umayyad discourse of power engaged with Sasanian legacy not just in Iran, where we find Arab-Sasanian coins of the early Umayyads, but also in ex-Byzantine greater Syria, where a statue at Khirbat al-Mafjar demonstrates affinities between Sasanian and caliphal robes. In fact, the extensive studies of the Dome of the Rock, Mshattā, Quṣayr ʿAmra, and Khirbat al-Mafjar have explored the relationship between Sasanian, Byzantine, and early

[1] Pourshariati 2008, 23.

[2] Masʿūdī, qtd. and trans. Grabar 1954, 185 qtd. انا ابن كسرى وابىّ مروان وقيصرجدّى وجدّى خاقان. See also Bosworth, 1973, 53, relying on Ṭabarī and Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī; Fowden 1993, 145, citing Ṭabarī.

Islamic expressions of power and symbols of kingship.[3] Even the famous translation movement, frequently used as an example of how ʿAbbāsid caliphs navigated Sasanian models of kingship, might be rightly pushed back to the Umayyad period.[4]

The interest in Sasanian legacy, though, becomes even more pronounced under the ʿAbbāsids. The ruins of Ctesiphon stand even today just a stone's throw from Baghdad and ʿAbbāsid-era historians, geographers, and poets ruminate on the shadows cast by Sasanian legacy. For example, Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Faqīh, and Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's works corroborate that the ruins were left "so close to [Baghdad] that it is like a continuation of it."[5] This account is embellished in the form of a discussion between the caliph Manṣūr and his Khurāsānī adviser Khālid b. Barmak, when the latter suggests that Tāq-i Kisrā should be left for future generations to see the ruin of the Sasanian palaces, sitting in stark relief to the flourishing of Baghdad. Manṣūr decides instead to use the material for the construction of Baghdad, abandoning his plan when the costs became too high despite Khālid's warning that the caliph might appear incapable of effacing Sasanian power if he abandoned its destruction. As Z. Antrim notes, "[t]he end result is an incomplete erasure, and the partially ruined palace remains standing both as a testimony to what came before and a symbol of ambivalence about the continuity with the pre-Islamic past that recurs in foundation and conquest narratives in the discourse of place."[6]

Historians and littérateurs similarly make explicit reference to Sasanian *shāhanshāh*s as they ruminate on the fate of ʿAbbāsid caliphs. Mutawakkil's palace outside Samarrāʾ, known as Jaʿfariyya, was located on the site of a palace of Ḵosrow II, such that Masʿūdī recorded the caliph's death as follows: "Mutawakkil was assassinated in the very place where Shirawaih killed his father Chosroe Parviz."[7] The comparison is apt. Just as Shīrawayh's rule was short, a sign of the incipient decline of the Sasanian empire, so too did Muntaṣir's reign usher in a period of quick turnover of short-lived ʿAbbāsid caliphs. As Ṭabarī wrote: "I often heard people say, when the caliphate passed to al-Muntaṣir, that from the

[3] The list of relevant sources here is extensive. As a starting point, see Ettinghausen 1972; Grabar 1954; Hillenbrand 1981; for the extension of this discussion into Armenia, see Maranci 2015.

[4] See Gutas 2005; Saliba 2007.

[5] Antrim 2012, 163–4, n. 137.

[6] Antrim 2012, 60; see also Savant 2013a, 177–8.

[7] Soucek 2002, 259; see Northedge 2005, 49–62, on the Sasanian remnants around Samarrāʾ and 211–24 on Jaʿfariyya.

time he acceded to rule until his death he would live for six months, as did Shīrawayh b. Kisrā after he killed his father."[8] In other words, Sasanian legacy was a major factor in how the ʿAbbāsids themselves constructed caliphal power and how ʿAbbāsid-era historians described ʿAbbāsid rule. This process of developing ties to Sasanian might and kingship was certainly not introduced during the Iranian intermezzo, but rather developed under the earlier caliphs.

Arabic and Armenian literature construes the Caliphate as the heir to the Sasanian empire. It makes sense, then, for caliphs to present themselves as *shāhanshāh*s, for geographers to read Sasanian provinces into the caliphal North, or for administrators to yield to the established norms by relying on the presiding princes or local cavalry. It seems that historians and geographers writing in Arabic, with their intent focus on Anūshirwān's marriage, his settlers, and his building programs, certainly find Sasanian legacy to play a distinctive and determinative role in ʿAbbāsid-era descriptions of the caliphal North.

Before 861, the Marwānid and ʿAbbāsid caliphs claimed to be heirs to the Sasanians, but after the so-called Decade of Anarchy, local Iranian powers across the Caliphate began to express their own place as Sasanian heirs. With the local adoption of titles like *shāhanshāh*, we are met with conflicting strains of collective memory that suggest that not all of the kingdoms engaging with Sasanian history in the tenth century embraced a specifically Persian legacy like the Marwānids and ʿAbbāsids.

Whereas positive notices about the Sasanians and their relationship to the North appear in Georgian sources, the Armenians remained steadfastly anti-Sasanian. This is, as N. Garsoïan points out, the main reason historians today sometimes stumble over the idea that Armenia should be studied from the perspective of Iranian history: "Any favorable treatment of Persian rule in Armenia is revealed unconsciously and must be read by implication."[9] The literature of Armenia was penned only after Avarayr and the struggle to preserve Christianity against the *shāhanshāh*s. The comparison between Avarayr and Bughā's campaigns demonstrates that the negative views current in Armenian literature about the Sasanians transferred easily to their discourse about the Caliphate.

"Armenia's unalterable rejection of Zoroastrianism and of its entire Iranian inheritance"[10] means that the Bagratuni acceptance of the title

[8] Ṭabarī 1989, XXXIV 219, 1893, III 1496; Tor 2012, 148.
[9] Garsoïan 1984, 238.
[10] Garsoïan 1994, 125.

shāhanshāh is strikingly out of place. Whereas once Łewond rendered the name Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik as Yazdegerd in order to disparage Marwānid rule surreptitiously, now the Armenian and Georgian kings could embrace the idea that they themselves were the new *shāhanshāh*s. Why do the Bagratuni kings take up the title *shāhanshāh*, usually proscribed for a much-hated ruler? Why would an Arcruni king depict himself wearing the crown of the *shāhanshāh*, drawing implicit comparison between himself and none other than Yazdegerd?

This may logically be a result of mnemonic drift, as generations that did not experience Avarayr firsthand recreated memories of Sasanian rule, such that Sasanian might resonated as a symbol of power instead of persecution. A reasonable explanation is that the Bagratuni, Bagrationi, and Arcruni kings were simply responding to a discourse of power shared across the Iranian *oikoumene*. Gagik's crown, for example, shows some commonality with Būyid coins. The Georgian Bagrationis picked up on this discourse *via armeniaca* and yet minted their coins with the title *malik al-mulūk*, like the Būyids. But in order to express Bagratuni, Bagrationi, and Arcruni power in Iranian terms comparable to the other kingdoms across the Islamic world, we are left with the conclusion that the élite in the North reconfigured Sasanian history.

Yet another possible explanation emerges if we look to the traditions championed in the East and in particular the Sāmānid claim to descent from Bahrām Chōbīn: perhaps the claim to power of the Sasanians reflects the latent sense of Iranianness and/or a fractured memory of Parthian instead of Persian rule on the frontiers.

SASANIAN LEGACY AS A MARKER OF IRANIANNESS

The phrase "sons of kings" appears in Sasanian inscriptions and in Dasxuranc'i's text in a Sasanian context. Yet if *abnāʾ al-mulūk* renders the Old Persian *vīsō-puθra* and if it appears in Aramaic, the language of the Achaemenid chancellery, how do we know that its appearance in Arabic illustrates a continuation of a specifically Sasanian tradition? The phrase *abnāʾ al-mulūk* is useful to us because it ties the Armenian and Albanian élite into the context of Iranian nobility, in direct dialog with the élite of Khurāsān. Yet it predates the Sasanians. The extensive comparison between the North and the East, both bastions of Parthian power, necessitates the reexamination of "Sasanian" expressions of power that we might just as easily ascribe to the Arsacids. As Benveniste noted, "La titulature

parthe et sassanide n'a donc pas innové. Elle conserve le titre dans l'usage qui était déjà fixé sous les Achéménides."[11]

Let us revisit some of the Sasanian titles found in tenth-century descriptions of the North under caliphal rule and after, during the intermezzo. If the word *ostikan* entered Armenian from the Parthian instead of the Middle Persian, as J. Gippert argues, then it is not evident that the title would have been associated exclusively with the Sasanians. It occurs earlier, as well, as C. Toumanoff examines in his study of the fourth-century vitaxate.[12] P'awstos Buzandac'i notes that "the Armenian king Aršak had a eunuch, a favorite eunuch named Drastamat, a loyal *ostikan*, much honored and with great authority."[13] The *sparapet* Mušeł Mamikonean placed *ostikan*s over Ałjnik' and P'aytakaran "as overseers" (*verakac'u*s) under Aršak's son, King Pap (r. 370–4).[14]

This is perhaps more obvious with the title King of Kings. It is by no means certain Bagratuni and Bagrationi use of *shāhanshāh*, *malik al-mulūk*, or *mep'et'-mep'e* intended to evoke Sasanian power. The title was Achaemenid, but revived in the Arsacid period. Arsacid coins were frequently minted with the inscription βασιλεὺς βασιλέων and cuneiform tablets similarly use the title *šar šarrāni*.[15] M. Shayegan argues that the appearance of Achaemenid titles in the Arsacid period stems from Babylonian scribes able and eager "to qualify the *Iranian* dynasty of the Arsacids with the imperial title of their ancestors" in an effort to distance Parthian rulers from their Seleucid predecessors.[16] The title was also current under Tigran II, known as Tigran Mec ("the Great") in Armenian, the Artaxiad king from 95–55 BCE who minted his coins with the inscription βασιλεὺς βασιλέων. While his adoption of the title was likely part of the competition between Rome and Parthia and so not tied to any claim to Armenian–Parthian relations,[17] this serves as an example of one of the

[11] Benveniste 1966, 25.

[12] Toumanoff 1963, 176–7.

[13] P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 198, see also 551, 1987, 314: Եւ ներքինի մի Հայոց թագաւորն Արշակայ, ոստիկան հաւատարիմ լեալ, ներքինի սիրելի մեծի իշխանութ եան և մեծի պատիւի, և անուն Դրաստամատն։

[14] P'awstos Buzandac'i 1989, 200 and 201, see also 551, 1987, 322 and 324.

[15] Sellwood 1983; Shayegan 2011, 42.

[16] Shayegan 2011, 44–5.

[17] Shayegan 2011, 245 re: the Roman subjugation of Armenia in 66 BCE: "Thus the adoption of the imperial title, at a time when Tigranes had reached the nadir of his power, ought to be linked with Pompeius' design to dispute Arsacid hegemony in the East, by usurping the title 'king of kings,' and bestowing it upon the new vassal king of Armenia, who was beholden to Rome. Thus through the intermediary of Tigranes, the imperial title became a tool in the hegemonic duel between Parthia and Rome."

more memorable rulers in the North who claimed the title well before the Sasanians' rise to power.

The title King of Kings was associated with Iranian rulers – Achaemenid, Arsacid, and Sasanian – and applied as such to local rulers across the Iranian *oikoumene* during the intermezzo. The titles employed to refer to caliphal rule (*ostikan*, *abnāʾ al-mulūk*) or to independent rule (*shāhanshāh*) in sources composed during the intermezzo resonate clearly in a Sasanian setting, but they also claim a long heritage in broader descriptions of Iranian power. If we look for non-Sasanian inspiration for the revival of such titles in the North, the Parthians emerge as the most likely candidates.

THE MEMORY OF PARTHIAN RULE IN THE ʿABBĀSID PERIOD

Parthian history in the North makes sense of the two main lacunae of this book. First, medieval Armenian historians traditionally date Movsēs Xorenacʻi, known today in Armenian as "the father of history" (*patma-hayr*), to the reign of Pērōz (r. 459–84). R. Thomson, distilling decades of debate, identified numerous cues in Xorenacʻi's *History of the Armenians* both to reject the fifth-century attribution and to forward an ʿAbbāsid-era date before the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand in 775.[18] The date of Movsēs Xorenacʻi is significant not only to sketch out Armenian historiography with some level of confidence, but also because his work exhibits Armenian nostalgia for Parthian rule. After situating the Armenians in a biblical genealogy leading back to Noah, Xorenacʻi starts

> Arshak the Great, king of the Persians and Parthians, who was Parthian by race, having rebelled against the Macedonians, they say, ruled over all the East and Assyria. He killed Antiochus, the king of Nineveh, and brought into subjection under himself the whole universe. He made his brother Vaļarshak king over this land of Armenia, thinking it convenient in this way to render his own rule unshakable.[19]

[18] Xorenacʻi 1978, 1–8 and 58–61; Toumanoff 1961c.

[19] Xorenacʻi 1978, 81–2, 1981, 34: ԶԱրշակ մեծ, արքայ Պարսից և Պարթևից, որ և ազգաւ իսկ Պարթև, ապստամբեալ ասեն ի Մակեդոնացւոց և թագաւորեալ ի վերայ ամենայն արևելից և Ասորեստանեայց, և սպանեալ զԱնտիոքոս թագաւոր ի Նինուէ՝ հնազանդեցուցեալ զամենայն տիեզերս ընդ իւրով ձեռամբ: Սա թագաւորեցուցանէ զեղբայր իւր զՎաղարշակ ի վերայ աշխարհիս Հայոց, պատեհ համարեալ այսպէս իմն անշարժ իւրոյ թագաւորութեանն մնալ:

Xorenacʿi's history thus links the North and the East, establishing the relationship between Parthian rule in Armenia and the broader empire. The *History of the Armenians* ends soon after Sasanian abrogation of the Arsacid kingdom in Armenia in 428 with the death of the catholicos Sahak Partʿew ("the Parthian") in 439. Sahak was a descendant of Grigor Lusaworič himself, who was similarly known as Partʿew and likely from the Sūrēn family.

This history, then, is not merely a *History of the Armenians*, but a history of Armenia during a very specific time, i.e., under the rule of the Parthian Arsacids and the spiritual guidance of the Parthian catholicoi. As such, Xorenacʿi correlates the death of Sahak with the fall of Arsacid rule as an end to Parthianness in two senses. The final few pages of Xorenacʿi's book are a dramatically emotional response to the collapse of Arsacid rule: "I lament over you, Armenia; I lament over you who are superior to all the [nations] of the north. For your king and priest, counselor and teacher, have been removed."[20] He finishes with the complaint that "the kings are cruel and evil rulers, imposing heavy and onerous burdens and giving intolerable commands."[21]

Why would Xorenacʿi compose a work on Arsacid rule, cutting off at the start of Sasanian occupation of Armenia, when he lived in the first decades of ʿAbbāsid control? Since he claims to be writing during the reign of Yazdegerd II (r. 439–57), his complaint about the tyranny of kings is presumably meant to imply Sasanian rule. Moving the composition of Xorenacʿi's history into the ʿAbbāsid period substantially changes the implications of this passage. If he did indeed write between 750 and 775, this blurs the distinctions between the Sasanians and the ʿAbbāsids, as is common in Armenian sources that we have examined here. Yet he is not only disparaging Persian/caliphal rule, but also lamenting the loss of Parthian rule and Armenian independence under the Armenian Arsacids.

The second main lacuna of this book similarly exhibits ties between the North and the East, if harder to pin on Parthian power explicitly. The Khurramī revolts, while each regionally distinct, erupted across the entire north of the Iranian *oikoumene*, including both the North and East. Parthian revolts under the Sasanians had accomplished the same only under a single banner, such as we find during the rebellions of the Mihrānid Bahrām Chōbīn

[20] Xorenacʿi 1978, 350,1981, 446: Ողբամ զքեզ, Հայոց աշխարհ, ողբամ զքեզ, հանուրց հիւսիսականաց վեհացոյն.զի բարձաւ թագաւոր և քահանայ, խորհրդական և ուսուցող.

[21] Xorenacʿi 1978, 354,1981, 452: Զի թագաւորք տիրեալք խիստք և չարաչարք, բեռինս բառնալով ծանունս և դժուարակիրս, հրամանս տալով անտանելիս.

or the Ispahbudhān Vistāhm. The rebel Bābak appears only once in this book in the story about Sahl b. Sunbāṭ, as an example of the independence of the Albanian landed élite vis-à-vis the center. Despite the ʿAbbāsid-era concern that Bābak intended to reinstate the Sasanian empire along with state-sponsored Zoroastrianism, P. Crone has argued that Khurramī doctrine diverges from Sasanian Zoroastrianism and suggests that it perhaps reveals greater affinity to Parthian or Sogdian traditions.[22] Such concerns appear elsewhere, as well, such that P. Pourshariati goes as far as to suggest that Bābak was in fact "probably of Parthian ancestry himself."[23]

Considering the effort to Sasanian-ize the North in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic texts, it is not at all surprising that we have skimmed past one of the most important contemporary Armenian sources (Xorenacʻi) and one of the most disruptive challenges lobbied against the ʿAbbāsids (Bābak). They demonstrate the continued discussions with power in Khurāsān and the resonance of Parthian power instead of Persian might well into the ninth century. With the exception of the insights gleaned from interpreting Xorenacʻi's texts and the Khurramī revolts, there is little evidence to trace any sort of dissonance between the Parthians and the ʿAbbāsids.

P. Pourshariati argues that the Parthian élite remained in power in both the North and the East because they aided the caliphal armies against the Sasanians. The Islamic "conquest of the Iranian plateau … was ultimately successful because powerful Parthian dynastic families of the *kūst-i khwarāsān* (quarter of the east) and *kūst-i ādurbādagān* (quarter of the north) abandoned the last Sasanian king, Yazdgird III, withdrew their support from Sasanian kingship, and made peace with the Arab armies. In exchange, most of these retained *de facto* power over their territories."[24] If Parthian élite removed their support for Sasanian rule, thereby aiding the Islamic conquests, in a bid to retain power, then the Umayyads seem to have upheld this bargain. But as we saw in Chapter 4, the ʿAbbāsids shifted the power structure among the noble families of the North.

Xorenacʻi's nostalgia for Parthian rule and Bābak's rebellion both suggest that Parthian power in the North had waned by the early ʿAbbāsid period. The collapse of the Armenian Arsacid and the Georgian

[22] Crone 2012, 320.

[23] Pourshariati 2008, 459. Pourshariati cites a number of Persian sources that label Bābak as a Persian, which is consistent with the assumptions of medieval Armenian literature, on which see Outmazian 1966.

[24] Pourshariati 2008, 4. Cf: Sánchez 2010, 236 points out that Ibn Qutayba distinguishes between the Persians, who were conquered by force (*ʿanwatan*), and the Khurāsānīs, who were conquered by treaty (*ṣulḥan*).

Xosroiani monarchies had occurred well before the advent of caliphal rule, of course, but Albania and Georgia continued to place scions of the Parthian Mihrānid family into the position of presiding prince. When the Bagrationi rose to power in 813, they were uprooting Parthian claims to the North. Similarly, Dasxuranc'i records that the last Mihrānid Arrānshāh Varaz-Trdat, died in 270 of the Armenian era, or 822–3.[25] While it is likely that Sahl-i Smbatean, known in Arabic as Sahl b. Sunbāṭ, the lord of Shakkī/Šak'ē and Arrānshāh, was also Mihrānid, Dasxuranc'i does not identify him as such explicitly because he hailed from a different branch of the Albanian Mihrānids.[26]

So let us chase a shadow of the Parthians of the ʿAbbāsid period. We have already seen that the élite of the North in the early ninth century, many of whom were Mihrānid, were called the *abnāʾ al-mulūk* in Arabic, a phrase that also occurs regularly in reference to the élite of Khurāsān. In particular, though, the phrase is very commonly employed in reference to the fourth *fitna* when the *abnāʾ al-mulūk* of both the North and the East backed Maʾmūn. We might easily gloss this term as "Iranian nobility,"[27] but what does "Iranian" mean in this context?

Modern scholars both allude to and challenge Maʾmūn's Persianized identity, but how "Persian" was Khurāsān in the ninth century? As I. Sánchez points out, Ibn Qutayba's ninth-century treatise on *shuʿūbiyya* "should be read as a meticulous demolition of the idea that Persians and Khurāsānids are the same people."[28] While Parthian rule may well have

[25] Minorsky 1953a, 509.

[26] This is very much contested, see Anassian 1969, 317–18 for a summary of the discussions of Mnac'akanyan and Bunijatov. Minorsky 1953a, 506 explains that "[t]he exact origin of Sahl is not explicitly stated"; see also 509: "As Varaz-Trdad is called the *last* Mihranid, it is clear that Sahl did not belong to that house." Yet Sahl appears not only as Erʿanshahik, but also Zarʿmihrakan. The later adjective associates him with Zarmihr Erʿanshahik, the only surviving member of the Armenophile branch of the Mihrānid family that was displaced by Mihran the kinsman of the Sasanian *shāhanshāh* as seen in Chapter 4; Dasxuranc'i 1983, 172. If we use Dasxuranc'i's adjectives to differentiate between the two branches of Albanian Mihrānids as seen in Dasxuranc'i 1983, 338, this would make Sahl a descendent of the Mihrakan branch while Varaz-Trdat was the last Arrānshāh from the Mirhean branch. We have two arguments for Sahl's Armenian ancestry: (1) the Mihrakan married with the local Armenians, so their bloodlines were mixed; and (2) Arabic sources such as Masʿūdī identify him as an Armenian prince. I trust Dasxuranc'i over Masʿūdī on Sahl, given that (1) the Arabic sources tend not to identify people as "Albanian" even though Arabic sources clearly recognize the existence of Albania; and (2) Arabic sources similarly do not typically identify anyone in the North as Parthian even though we know that many of the élite were Parthian.

[27] Elad 2005, 318.

[28] Sánchez 2010, 232.

been a very shadowy memory in the East indeed, it was more recent in the North, where Arsacid and Mihrānid rule continued much later. We might then wonder if the comparison between the Xosroiani king Mirian and the ʿAbbāsid caliph Maʾmūn in the *Book of Kʿartʿli*, as discussed in Chapter 4, constitutes a Georgian attempt to imagine Maʾmūn settled in Parthia and supporting Parthian power vis-a-vis Baghdad. If this analogy holds, Maʾmūn would represent Parthian power against Amīn's adoption of Persian legitimacy as the ʿAbbāsid neo-*shāhanshāh*.

THE PARTHIAN INTERMEZZO

It is not for naught that the Sāmānids, ruling over what was once Parthia, trace their lineage to Bahrām Chōbīn, the Mihrānid rebel who ousted Ḵosrow II, however briefly, from power in 590. Based in Khurāsān, the traditional heartlands of Parthian power, the Sāmānids did occasionally embrace the title *shāhanshāh*, in dialog with their neighbors the Būyids in Iraq and Iran. Yet neo-Sasanian images from Sāmānid territories demonstrated artistic ties to the East, placing their acceptance of Sasanian legacy in a specific regional setting.[29] In other words, the Sāmānids cultivated an image of Iranian kingship that is very different from that of the ʿAbbāsids by favoring the Mihrānids instead of the Sasanians.

We might also find hints of Sāmānid interest in a broader definition of Iranianness in their patronage of the *Shāhnāma*. They commissioned Abū Manṣūr al-Maʿmarī to compose a New Persian prose version of the Iranian epic, completed in 957. This text, now lost, served as the main source for Firdowsī's version, which was started under Sāmānid rule and benefitted from Sāmānid patronage, although dedicated to Maḥmūd Ghaznawī after the fall of the Sāmānids in 999. P. Pourshariati suggests that this interest in the *Shāhnāma* "cannot be understood but in the context of their patronage by families of Parthian ancestry, or at least families with pretensions to this ancestry, in the tenth century." In this, she speculates that there existed in the tenth century "a cultural *vogue* in the region where the *Pahlav* and their heritage were as sought after, cultivated, and circulated, as those of the by now defunct, and at times maligned, Sasanians."[30] The question, then, is whether the example provided by the Sāmānids can help us understand the political developments of the tenth-century North.

[29] Treadwell 2003, 328–9.
[30] Pourshariati 2010, 348.

Interestingly, claims to Parthian ancestry appear to have been in vogue in the North, as well. This suggests that the Armenians and Georgians may well be evoking Iranian descriptors of power in terms comprehensible to the Būyid embrace of all things Sasanian, but meant as a nod to Arsacid or to Mihrānid ascendancy. If we reconsider Bagratuni, Bagrationi, and Arcruni embrace of Iranian expressions of legitimacy, we might problematize the assumption that the constructed memory of the Sasanians was the primary unifier during the intermezzo. Perhaps the reason the North and the East remain related stems from their common interest in promoting the memory of Parthian rule in contrast to that of the Persian Sasanians.

Dasxuranc'i explains that the Mihrānid line in Albania was revived in 953. When the last Mihrānid Arrānshāh was killed in 822–3, his wife "found courage worthy of a man" and fled to Xač'en, which appears as either Khājīn or Khāshin in Arabic texts. She married Spram, her daughter with Varaz-Trdat, to Atrnarseh the son of Sahl, known in Arabic as Adharnarsa b. Isḥāq al-Kāshinī, and, five generations later, the Mihrānids return to power: "The right hand of the Most High chose the eldest son of Išxan, Yovhannēs, also known as Senek'erim, and called him to be king; thus did Almighty God restore the long-extinct kingdom through him. The king of Persia bestowed many decorations upon him and gave him his father's crown and his steed."[31] V. Minorsky identifies "the king of Persia" as the Sallārid Marzubān[32] and this "long-extinct kingdom" refers to the line of Mihrānid Arrānshāhs, brought back to power after their fall through the grace of God himself.

Sumbat-Davit'is-dze, writing during the intermezzo around 1030, similarly implied that the Bagrationi king Bagrat boasted familial ties to the Parthians through his mother's bloodline: "the dearest Queen Mariam was filled with boldness and courage, for she was descended from the resplendently strong and great Arshakuniani kings."[33]

By contrast, Armenian sources offer support for Parthian revival in a very different fashion. The Bagratunis and Arcrunis were not Parthians and instead formulated claims to legitimacy based on their purported relationship to the kings of the Old Testament. Yet Arsacid legacy appears

[31] Dasxuranc'i 1961, 227, 1983, 341: Իսկ զերէց որդին Իշխանաննոյ զՅովհաննէս, որ և Սենեքերիմ կոչեցաւ, ընտրեաց աջ բարձրելոյն՝ կոչելով ի թագաւորութիւն.զվաղնջուց խափանեալ թագաւորութիւնն տէրն ամենակալ ի ձեռն սորա նորագեաց, զոր թագաւորն Պարսից շքով և մեծամեծ զարդուք զարդարեաց զնա.տայ նմա և զթագ հօր իւրոյ և զնորին երիվարն։

[32] Minorsky 1953a.

[33] Sumbat Davit'is-dze 2003, 367.

in two ways in the late ninth and tenth centuries. First, later Armenian sources construe the elevation of the Bagratunis to kingship as a restitution of the Armenian monarchy, which had been in abeyance since the fall of the Arsacid line in 428. Matt'ēos Uṙhayec'i claims that when Ašot III received the crown in 961, "there was great rejoicing throughout all Armenia, for the people witnessed the reestablishment of the royal throne of Armenia as it had existed among their ancestors."[34] The point here is to stress the rebirth of the Armenian monarchy, thus blurring the lines between the Arsacids and the Bagratunis.

Second, Byzantine sources boasted that Basil I was a descendant of the Arsacid kings of Armenia.[35] According to the continuator of Theophanes's *History*, Sahak Part'ew himself had predicted the return of Arsacid power, symbolized in Basil's rule.[36] The Armenian tradition built on this accordingly. In the eleventh century, Asołik introduced Ašot I's elevation to kingship with the reminder the Bagratunis were traditionally responsible for crowning the kings "in the days of Vałaršak the Arsacid."[37] Starting with Vardan Arewelc'i, the Armenian tradition claimed that Basil I received *his* crown from Ašot instead of vice versa, thereby allowing Ašot to fulfill his familial role by crowning the Arsacid king.[38]

The literatures of the North thus impart positive memories of both political independence and Parthian power in the North (and elsewhere) during the intermezzo. They also suggest that the memory of Arsacid rule offered significant political and/or cultural clout during the intermezzo. This provides an alternative explanation for the reliance on Iranian expressions of legitimacy in the tenth century: perhaps the title *shāhanshāh* resonated in Armenia and Georgia during the intermezzo specifically because it could ambiguously fit both Arsacid and Sasanian pasts.

Just as the expression of Iranian legitimacy occurred through the reinvention of the Sasanian past, so too would embracing the Parthian past require some creative rewriting. For example, Sebēos details the

[34] Jones 2007, 31, specifies, correctly, that "It is possible that the 'ancestors' to whom Matthew refers were not just the Armenian Arsacid kings, as the phrase is generally interpreted, but also included the early Bagratuni kings." Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i, a notably earlier source, also refers to "the brilliant and complete restoration of things in Armenia" under Ašot. He could be speaking of a number of topics, though. Notably, Drasxanakertc'i narrated about the return of the captives from Samarrā' and Ašot's expansion of territory. Drasxanakertc'ı 1987, 130, 1996, 144.

[35] Treadgold 2013, 167. See Adontz 1933 on the origins of Basil I.

[36] Muradyan 2014, 319.

[37] Asołik 1885, 158: յաւուրս Վաղարշակայ արշակունւոյ

[38] Jones 2007, 38–9.

level of Armenian involvement in Sasanian campaigns in the East, where Armenian troops were pitted against Parthian troops. Some Armenians rebelled with Vistāhm, who appears as Vstam in Armenian, while Smbat Bagratuni was the right hand of Ḵosrow II.[39] We also find examples of disagreement within Parthian houses, such as the two lines of Mihrānid lineage in Albania that Dasxuranc'i labels as Mihrakan and Mirhean. The Parthian intermezzo, like the Iranian intermezzo more broadly, reflects a constructed memory of a past that was much more complicated and divisive.

CONCLUSIONS

This book has examined the period of caliphal rule in the North with a close eye to the circumstances of the Iranian intermezzo, when most of our Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian sources were composed. The adoption of Sasanian expressions of legitimacy in the North and the apparent continuity between Sasanian and caliphal rule may well be a product of the norms and expectations prevalent across the *oikoumene* in the tenth century. This concluding chapter has revisited some of the "Sasanian-isms" found through the course of this book to question their place in the broader history of Iran, specifically the period of Arsacid rule.

Despite the "collective historical amnesia" about the Arsacids in Sasanian and ʿAbbāsid historical traditions, Arsacid rule was comparatively recent in the North and Xorenac'i's history demonstrates how central it was to Armenian perceptions of rule even in the ʿAbbāsid period. Further, the Mihrānids held the positions of presiding princes in both Georgia and Albania throughout the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods. Yet in the first decades of the ninth century, the Parthian élite in the North fell from power. It is convenient to think of this as the delayed collapse of the Sasanian–Parthian confederacy, exchanging traditional local élite for others more favorable to ʿAbbāsid rule, particularly the Bagratuni family, but there is little explicit evidence that the ʿAbbāsids had a hand in these shifts in power.

The élite of the North were not thoughtlessly embracing a constructed Sasanian past, but rather employing Iranian terms of legitimacy that allowed them to navigate the Sasanian legacy but simultaneously maintain a connection to Parthian power. If the construction of pre-Islamic

[39] Sebēos 1979, 98.

Iranian history in the North and the East looks to Parthian antecedents to explain the circumstances of power during the intermezzo, this suggests that the Armenian and Georgian sources, like the Persian sources penned under the Sāmānids, are not continuing the same historiographical project that we find in Arabic sources, which stress the role of Sasanian giants such as Anūshirwān. The Iranian intermezzo thus emerges not only as a multi-confessional moment in Iranian political discourse, but also as the ground where rulers and writers across the *oikoumene* both remembered and unremembered not only Persian, but also Parthian power.

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